STAYING AT THE FOREFRONT

By:
Mike Bittner, P.E., PTOE, PTP
Faisal Hamood, EIT
Gregory Judy, P.E., PTOE
James Robertson, Ph.D., P.E.
Tra Vu, Ph.D., P.E.
The transportation industry continues to see an increase in the number of active and influential professional organizations. Some of the newer organizations include the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITS America), the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), and Young Members in Transportation (YPT). Additionally, many existing professional organizations continue to be active and influential as well; these organizations include the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), American Planning Association (APA), the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), International Municipal Signal Association (IMSA), and Transportation Research Board (TRB). Meanwhile, the quantity of funds and time available for members in these organizations has remained constant or reduced.

Between the increase in the number of societies seeking transportation professionals’ attention and reduction in available resources for professional society activities, the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) faces a need to demonstrate relevance and a need to stay ahead of industry trends. If ITE is unable to demonstrate relevance or ITE is unable to stay ahead of emerging trends, ITE will find it difficult to maintain its standing as a leader in the transportation industry.

To this end, the objectives of this white paper are to look at:

- Why some of the other professional societies exist and how these organizations might affect ITE member professional activities.
- How ITE can engage with other professional societies for the benefit of the transportation profession.
• How ITE can stay ahead of transportation industry trends in order to help manage the number of new and emerging professional societies moving forward.

To accomplish these objectives, this paper provides:

• An overview of four existing/emerging organizations with input from leadership in these organizations. Those organizations are ITS America, IMSA, NACTO, and YPT.
• Recommendations on interacting with other organizations with examples using ITS America, IMSA, NACTO, and YPT.
• Potential strategies for how ITE can proactively engage with new and emerging professional societies moving forward.
PERCEPTIONS OF ITE FROM EXISTING AND EMERGING PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

Our team sought input from members in IMSA, ITS America, NACTO, and YPT in order to understand how these organizations serve people within the transportation industry. This section contains a summary of key things that we learned about these organizations. Within these summaries, our group hypothesizes why some transportation professionals may choose to participate in these organizations activities instead of participating in ITE activities. In general, new transportation professional societies come into being because a segment of the population feels as though a specific need or set of needs is not being met and that there is a need to do so.
IMSA

IMSA seeks “to improve the efficiency, installation, construction, and maintenance of Public Safety equipment and systems by increasing the knowledge of its members on traffic controls, fire alarms, radio communications, roadway lighting, work zone traffic control, emergency medical services and other related systems.” Dating back to October 1896, “IMSA is the oldest known association of its kind in the world.” At that time, “the basic purpose of the organization was to keep its members and others in the profession, up-to-date on proper procedures of construction and maintenance of signal systems and informed on new products and equipment developments.” (1)

IMSA provides individual-based membership with full-memberships available to public agency employees and associate memberships for people outside public agencies. Regardless of membership type, IMSA provides a wide array of technical training and certification programs for all its members. This includes technical training and certification for people that install, operate, and maintain traffic signals, signs and markings, work zone traffic control, roadway lighting, and fiber optics for traffic signals.

Based upon our group’s conversation with members of IMSA, IMSA plays the following role in development Transportation Professionals:

- IMSA provides an opportunity for members to demonstrate competency in the installation, construction, and maintenance of traffic signals, signs, and markings.
- IMSA provides an opportunity for members to develop relationships and exchange ideas at annual section and national meetings.
- IMSA provides members an opportunity to learn about emerging technology and learn about the implementation of emerging technology.
Based upon group’s conversation with members of IMSA, transportation professional may chose IMSA over ITE for the following reasons:

- Some transportation professionals may feel a need to experience the same technical training and obtain the same certifications as the employees they are managing.

- Some transportation professionals may want detailed understanding traffic signal systems; an understanding that includes the limits of the electrical components.

In general, a transportation professional may choose to be involved in IMSA instead of ITE if their role within their organization involves the installation, construction, operation, and maintenance of traffic signals, traffic signs, and traffic markings.
ITS America is “the largest organization dedicated to advancing the research and development of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to build a safer, smarter, more efficient transportation network.” (2). Beginning in 1990, ITS America began to form in order to accelerate the deployment of intelligent transportation systems and technologies. At ITS America events, it is common to see companies, such as Google, demonstrating some of the newest technological advancements that may someday benefit transportation system users.

ITS America provides organization-based membership. After 25 years, ITS America has now formed into 27 chapters covering 40 states with more than 1,200 member organizations. These member organizations include public agencies, private sector companies, and researcher institutes.

Based upon our group’s conversations with ITS Professionals, ITS-America plays the following roles in developing transportation professionals.

- ITS America provides an environment where professionals implementing ITS technology can build relationships with professionals developing and manufacturing these technologies.

- ITS America provides member organizations an opportunity to provide input that are used by the Federal Highway Administration when setting standards and guidelines for integrated transportation solutions.

Based upon our group’s conversations with ITS professionals from a public agency, a consulting firm, and a computer technology firm, organizations may
choose to have their employees participate in ITS America instead of ITE for the following reasons:

- Organizations do not feel as though ITE provides an opportunity for its member organizations to have input into the guidelines and requirements associated with the implementation of technology within the transportation industry.

- Organizations do not feel as though ITE provides a good enough opportunity for its members to build relationships with other people interested in the development and implementation of new technology within the transportation industry.

- Organizations do not feel as though ITE provides sufficient opportunity to develop as an ITS professional; something that these organizations feel is very important to them.

In general, organizations that choose to have their members participate in ITS America activities do so because their organization depends on the implementation of technology and they do not see ITE as containing the thought leaders in this area of the profession.
NACTO “facilitates the exchange of transportation ideas, insights and best practices among large cities, while fostering a cooperative approach to key issues facing cities and metropolitan areas.” NACTO formed in order to promote collaboration between large and dense cities that do not have the space for car-centric transportation systems in order to promote a people-centric design philosophy. To accomplish its objectives, NACTO communicates city transportation needs directly to the Secretary of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration in order to avoid existing car-centric design philosophies within the transportation industry.

NACTO provides organization based-membership for city transportation directors and transportation commissioners. The NACTO Board must approve membership into NACTO. The NACTO Board consists of transportation directors and transportation commissioners from member cities. At this time, NACTO has 20 member cities, 20 affiliate member cities, and 4 international member cities.

Based upon our group’s conversations with people involved with NACTO, NACTO plays the following roles in developing transportation professionals:

- NACTO provides an environment where city transportation officials can build relationships with other city transportation professionals and exchange ideas on people-centric urban transportation design.
- NACTO provides a single voice for cities in the national debate over the allocation of limited resources when developing transportation networks that go through urban areas.
- NACTO provides guidance on transportation alternatives that limit automobile mobility while promoting multimodal alternatives.
Based upon our group’s conversation with people involved with NACTO, transportation agencies may choose to be involved with NACTO instead of ITE for the following reasons:

- Some transportation professionals may not see ITE as a method for building relationships with transportation professionals that work in cities.
- Some transportation professionals may feel that ITE’s promotes the interests of state department of transportation officials and consultants as opposed to the interests of city transportation officials.
- Some transportation professionals may feel that ITE’s focus is on providing mobility to people in cars as opposed to mobility for all people.

In general, people may choose to be involved with NACTO instead of ITE because they are interested in developing transportation policies that promote people-centric design with urban areas.
“YPT provides professional development, fellowship, and networking opportunities for young professionals in the transportation field across the country and around the world” (3). YPT began in Washington DC and started to form as an organization in 2009. At that time, the purpose of YPT was to create opportunities for young professionals from diverse perspectives to create relationships that will benefit the transportation industry. At YPT events, it is common to see professionals that work in all facets of the transportation profession interacting with each other.

In 2011, YPT began organizing itself into Chapters within larger metropolitan areas and, in 2012, created an international board of directors to aid in the creation of new chapters. Prior to 2012, the Washington, DC chapter was acting as the international board. At the end of 2014, YPT had 1,344 paid members and 6,941 friends within 23 chapters. Twenty-one of those chapters are in Unites States and two of those chapters are in Canada (4).

Based upon our group’s conversation with YPT members, YPT plays the following roles in the development of Transportation Professionals:

- YPT is a way of easing into the profession and offers an opportunity to build a broad network.
- YPT events are first about building relationships and second about technical knowledge.
- YPT has a tendency to attract leaders in the transportation profession as presenters at their events. For example, sitting secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood in 2013.
In the economic downturn following 2008, YPT offered a low cost method for building a network that allowed people to recover from job loss and remain in the transportation profession.

Based upon our group’s conversation with YPT members, young professionals may have chosen YPT instead of ITE for the following reasons:

- Young professionals felt as though ITE did not want to help young members ease their way into the profession.
- ITE events did not offer opportunities to get to know the other people in the room and build connections with other people.
- When opportunities to meet other people did occur within ITS, young professionals tend to feel as though more established professionals were not approachable.
- ITE’s focus was on highly technical discussions and providing professional development hours and many young professionals do not feel comfortable contributing to these discussions or do not need professional development hours.

In general, people that may have chosen YPT over ITE did so because they were looking for friends within the profession and people that they could exchange ideas with in an informal manner; they do not see ITE as providing this opportunity.
THOUGHTS ON ENGAGING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

In many situations, there are common interests. When there is common interest, it benefits the transportation industry if these professional societies form coalitions.

In all situations, it is critical to remember that the purpose of these coalitions is to create win-win relationships that benefit the transportation industry and to create professional development opportunities for ITE members. While a win-lose relationship might benefit ITE in the short term, other organizations may see these relationships as being predatory and begin avoiding interactions with ITE. In general, ITE should pursue coalitions were ITE members benefit, members in the other association benefits, and the profession benefit.

In this section, our group presents thoughts on creating successful coalitions with other organizations and activities ITE can engage in with these other associations. Additionally, our group illustrates these concepts by providing examples of situations where ITE has successfully implement these recommendations in the past. While there are many ideas within this section, the thoughts in this section are not exhaustive.
CREATING SUCCESSFUL COALITIONS

This section contains three thoughts on creating successful coalitions with other associations. The first thought is to identify potential associations to form coalitions with, the second is to allocate ITE resources to building these coalitions, and the third thought is to form positive relationships with these associations in order to build long-lasting and strong coalitions.

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS

In order to select organizations that ITE wants to create partnerships with, ITE must first identify other professional societies within the transportation industry. This includes new organizations, old organizations, and organizations that used to be outside the industry. Within the transportation industry, an example of a new organization is YPT, an example of an old organization is IMSA, and an example of an outside organization is the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

In the identification of these other organizations, it is would be good for ITE to gain an understanding of these organizations. For example, why they exist, how they might interact with ITE members, and why ITE members might be attracted to these organizations. In this process, it would be good to perform the type of analysis that our group did for IMSA, ITS America, NACTO, and YPT in the first part of this paper. From this analysis, ITE can then make an informed decision on which organizations it would like to engage.

Another part of identifying potential organizations is identifying joint interests between ITE and these associations. These joint interests help to define the areas and activities that ITE should participate in and pursue as part of a coalition with other associations.
ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO THE EFFORT

Once ITE has identified potential organizations, ITE now has to allocate resources to the effort of engaging with these other organizations. ITE resources include money, ITE Paid Staff Time, ITE elected Leadership Time, ITE member time, and the ITE Brand. Additionally, ITE must recognize that each of these resources are limited and that it is not in ITE’s interest to try to be everything to everybody. In Good To Great And The Social Sector, Jim Collins identifies this as the Hedgehog Concept (5). Jim indicates that great social sector organization avoid allocating resources to efforts that do not generate more resource for the originations objective.

In ITE’s case, resources are time, money, and brand. Time is how well ITE is able to able to attract member involvement in the effort, money has to do with ITE sustaining adequate cash flow, and brand is how well ITE can cultivate a deep well of emotional goodwill and mindshare of potential supporters. In essence, ITE should allocate resources to efforts that ITE members wish to push forward, efforts that have minimal negative effect on cash flow, and efforts that create good will.

FORM POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

To create successful coalitions, ITE should seek to create long-term positive relationships with identified associations. In other words, ITE needs to network well with these other associations. In networking relationships, people typically think of three types of relationships, they are:

- Win-Win: both associations benefit from the relationship.
- Win-Lose: one association gains while the other association does not
- Lose-Lose: both associations do not benefit.
However, there is also a fourth type of relationship worth pursuing, the fourth type is:

- Win-WIN: one association wins some and the other association wins more.

In relationship building, it is this fourth type of relationship that tends to yield long-term win-win relationships. The way this method works is where the person (or association) gives more than they receive on purpose. Ultimately, the key to building long-term positive relationships is trust between the two parties. What a Win-WIN relationship does is demonstrate that your association’s intentions are trustworthy. While adopting a Win-WIN approach may result in another association taking advantage of ITE (a win-lose relationship where ITE loses), ultimately, these minor loses will be outweighed by the long-term positive relationships that are created.

To illustrate the concept of Win-WIN, it is similar to the philosophy of consulting firms that aim to over deliver to their clients. Ultimately, the purpose of over delivering is to demonstrate that the consulting firm has the clients’ interests in mind and to build a long-term relationship with the client. Additionally, a similar analogy can show why win-lose relationships where ITE wins are bad for ITE. In general, consulting firms that engage in win-lose relationships where they win (for example over promising or under delivering to a client) tend to spend more resources looking for new clients than consulting firms that over deliver. The reason being that consulting firms that over promise or under deliver often do not receive repeat business from prior clients whereas consulting firms that over deliver do receive repeat business.
Once ITE has identified associations that ITE wants to interact with, there are multiple ways to continue building win-win relationships between the organizations. In this section of his white paper, our group shares six activities ITE can use to engage with these organizations and existing examples of situations where ITE is already doing some of these activities with other organizations.

**SHARE INFORMATION**

A low risk activity that ITE can engage in is sharing information with other organizations. By sharing information, our group is talking about sharing insights into trends within the transportation industry with organizations that can use these insights to benefit the transportation industry. Our group envisions that this type of activity would happen at multiple levels and would include discussions that affect the whole transportation industry.

An example of sharing information is ITE sharing its perception of how public policy changes affect the transportation industry. In general, it is beneficial for ITE to share these insights with other organizations so that a coalition of societies can promote policies that benefit the transportation profession and the public. By doing so, ITE members will benefit from these policies.

**PROVIDE ACCESS TO ITE MEMBERSHIP**

Another low risk activity for ITE is to share information that ITE receives from other associations with ITE members. By sharing this information, ITE creates access to ITE members for the other association. Additionally, in a win-win relationship, ITE would receive similar access to the other association’s members.
An example of ITE providing access to its members for other associations is ITE communicating when TRB publishes a new Highway Capacity Manual, ITE communicating when AASHTO publishes a new Green Book, or ITE communicating when NACTO produces a new design guide. In all three of these situations, ITE has provided these other associations with access to ITE membership. Additionally, in all three of these situations, ITE creates a win-win scenario because ITE members become aware of the most recent guidelines, which ITE members then use to strengthen the publics’ perception of the profession.

HOST JOINT EVENTS

An activity that ITE could engage in is hosting joint events. In general, the risk taken by ITE depends on the nature of the event. For example, a low-risk event is a happy hour, a medium-risk event is a joint workshop, and a high-risk event is a joint conference. The event type that ITE should engage in with another association depends on the nature of ITE’s relationship with that association.

There are many examples of ITE successfully hosting joint events with other associations. On the low-risk end ITE and YPT regularly have social events at the International meeting. In the medium-risk range, ITE regularly host workshops at ITE meetings including a workshop on urban street design with NACTO. AT the joint meeting level, in 2012, the ITE Midwestern District successfully held a joint meeting with one of the TRB committees. The name of this conference was the ITE Midwestern Conference.

PARTICIPATE IN JOINT PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS

An activity that involves moderate risk for ITE are joint projects and publications. In joint projects and publications, ITE shares ITE resources with another association to achieve a specific goal. The goal of these projects and publications should
be one that is in the interest of both associations. The benefit of joint projects and publications is the ability for ITE to achieve goals that are beyond ITE’s ability to accomplish on its own.

An example of ITE successfully engaging in joint projects and joint publications is the recent partnership with the Center of New Urbanism to produce a Complete Streets Guide. Through this partnership, ITE members will have an opportunity to provide input on the guidance transportation professionals will use for years to come. Additionally, because of this partnership, ITE and the Center of New Urbanism can create something useful to everyone in the transportation profession.

PROVIDE JOINT BENEFITS

An activity ITE could engage in are joint membership benefits. The risk associated with this activity varies based upon the nature of the benefit. For example, a low risk activity could include reduced costs for publications from other associations and a higher-risk activity might be joint (or reduced cost) membership. The risk ITE elects to take in this activity will depend on the nature of the relationship between ITE and the other association. In situations where ITE has a long lasting, well established, and trusting relationship, ITE should elect to take more risk in the interest of building long-lasting and positive relationships.

An example of ITE successfully providing joint benefits for ITE members are the reduced costs for some publications produced by other associations. For example, ITE members typically pay the same price for the Highway Capacity Manual (a TRB publication) and AASHTO Green Book (an AASHTO Publication) that members of those associations pay.
STAYING AHEAD OF EMERGING TRENDS

Specialized organizations focusing on areas once supported by ITE now fill perceived knowledge gaps. As the transportation profession evolves into specialized practice areas, there is increased demand on ITE members to spend time in these other associations. These increased demands force ITE members to make difficult decisions on how they will allocate their time. This affects ITE membership, and the industry as a whole. The more great minds ITE is able to attract, the more ITE will be at the forefront of advancing the profession.

To address this concern, our group has recommendations on how ITE can stay ahead of emerging trends and make active decisions on how ITE supports these movements within the profession. In general, ITE cannot afford to act as passive bystanders watching the industry evolve and specialize. Therefore, our group recommends two ways that ITE can identify emerging trends and use this knowledge to make an active decision on how ITE will support emerging trends. These recommendations is to leverage the knowledge within the Coordinating Council and to leverage the knowledge within the membership.
The Coordinating Council is home to all ITE member technical activities. The councils within the Coordinating Council include all of the specialty areas within ITE. These specialties range from Traffic Engineering to Transportation Expert Witness, from Consultants to Education, and everything in between. The Coordinating Council is in the best position to recognize emerging trends, evaluate the importance of these trends, and have an initial idea on how ITE should react.

To this end, as part of each Council meeting, the individual council could identify emerging trends and then report these trends in the Coordinating Council meeting. For the foreseeable future, this should be a standing agenda item on the Coordinating Council Meeting and on the agenda for every council meeting within ITE.

Then, once emerging trends are identified, it would be the responsibility of the Coordinating Council to make a recommendation to the International Board of Directors. This recommendation could include whether ITE should lead this emerging trend or decide that the trend is outside the current expertise or ITE business model. If the trend is outside ITE’s business model, the Coordinating Council could strategize ways to collaborate with other associations that are leading the emerging trend. Regardless of the action selected, ITE will remain engaged as the industry evolves, which provides value to ITE members and the transportation profession.
LEVERAGE ITE MEMBERS

The greatest resource available to ITE is human capital in the form of ITE members. ITE members and their knowledge are the heart of the organization and ITE members are leaders in the transportation industry. It is in ITE’s interest to leverage ITE member knowledge and use this knowledge to advance the transportation profession.

To this end, ITE should engage its members to determining emerging trends on an annual basis. To do this, our group recommends a brief (no more than three questions) survey that ITE members can complete when they renew their dues. Ideally, the questions should be simple and easy to fill out. Some ideas of what these questions could be are:

- In the next year, what emerging trends should ITE focus on?
- What current topics would you like to see in upcoming ITE meetings, webinars and journals?
- If ITE chose to focus more effort on the topics, you have noted above, would you help lead or provide input on the topic?
- ITE staff could then sifting through the data and identifying trends. They would also be responsible for reporting these trends to the appropriate Council. That Council is then responsible for following up on the topic or with the member if they elected to be a part of the effort.
Renew ITE Membership

Once your application has been approved, you will receive an e-mail notification, followed by a mailed welcome packet to include your membership certificate. Dues will be assessed on the next page and must be paid with your application. Please click here for dues schedule.

Optional Survey

In the next year, what emerging trends should ITE focus on?

What current topics would you like more information on at ITE meetings, webinars, and journals?

If ITE chose to focus more effort on the topics you have noted above, would you help lead or provide input on the topic?
Additionally, below is a potential approach to taking these data from the members and transforming that into knowledge that ITE can use to make decisions. The heart of this approach is the membership and the coordinating council as the group that evaluates these data and makes recommendations to the international board.

The process begins and ends with the membership. The members answer the survey questions which are thereafter sorted by an ITE staff member. The related ITE council, within the coordinating council, receives the comments and decides on the next course of action. These courses of action may include:

1) Raising awareness about the council’s work by publishing a guideline or advertising

2) Addressing the topic and allocating resources to researching and understanding it

3) Refer the topic to coordinating council citing it’s requirements are beyond the scope and a new council may be created

Additionally, ITE may collaborate with an association or organization that already exists to create a guideline and share knowledge. In such circumstances, the coordinating council may be involved and IBOD may be consulted. If another association is already specialized in a topic, and is working to develop recommendations and guidelines, then ITE should seek to collaborate.

Ultimately, council work, and any collaboration would yield relevant technical knowledge to the membership. This benefits ITE as an organization, ITE members, the transportation profession, and the public.
SUMMARY

Within this paper, our group provides thoughts on how ITE can remain relevant within the transportation profession. Our group recommends that ITE find opportunities to build long lasting and strong coalitions with other associations in the transportation industry. Additionally, we recommend that ITE develop a mechanism to identify emerging trends and make active decisions on how ITE should be a part of these emerging trends. By implementing some of our recommendations, ITE has the potential to remain relevant as an association, relevant to ITE members and relevant to the transportation profession.
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