A long career in transportation began in the early 1970s for Florida Puerto Rico District Administrator Peter J. Yauch, P.E., PTOE, RSP2I, ISMA III (F), and he has been a proud member of ITE for 45 years. When Pete stepped in as District Administrator in 2017, there had been two previous people in the position and, as an active member, he had worked with both of them and was familiar with their efforts. As with most districts, the Florida Puerto Rico District Administrator’s main role is to provide continuity of guidance to the District Board, along with assistance and support as needed. There are administrative tasks, such as preparing officer notebooks and ordering shirts and name badges for the board, answering membership questions, tracking continuing education credits, finding meeting venues, and assisting in various ways during meetings and ceremonies.

Pete was fortunate to know from a young age what he wanted to do with his life. In elementary school, he developed an interest in traffic control devices, his annual science projects typically had some sort of traffic theme, and he even restored an old traffic signal while he was still in high school. Upon entering college at Georgia Tech, he says he was fortunate to get to know Professor Peter Parsonson, a noted educator on traffic signalization, with whom he consequently worked as a student research assistant for three years.

Upon graduating, it was assumed that he would work for the City of Atlanta, GA, USA on their new signal system, since he had interfaced with them so much during school. But after going through the interview process, the city had a hiring freeze. With graduation looming and no job secured, Pete interviewed with Tom Stout of the Atlanta office of JHK & Associates and ended up working with JHK for eight years, until he moved back to his hometown in the Tampa Bay area. Since that time, Pete's work has been in both the public and private sectors, including serving as a Florida Department of Transportation district signal systems engineer, the city traffic engineer for Clearwater, and the director of transportation for Pinellas County. He is currently with Iteris, Inc., after their acquisition of Albeck Gerken, Inc., in 2019.

Pete's history with ITE and its impact on his professional life are a great testament to the value in being active and engaged. “I joined as a student member in 1975, so we're looking at 45 years as a member. We were the Institute of Traffic Engineers at the time, and the magazine, then called Traffic Engineering, included some great articles, like how to use 8-millimeter movie cameras to record intersection operations and explaining the concept of dual ring actuated controllers,” Yauch says.

“My first international meeting was the Atlanta conference in 1978. I was a volunteer at a number of events, including a barbeque out at Stone Mountain Park. I remember John Edwards, who was the chair for the meeting, talking about how you get out of ITE what you put into it... and that still rings true today.”

Peter is such an asset to the District in so many ways. His institutional knowledge is invaluable and he always steps up to the plate to provide direction and support to our members and leadership.

– Thuha Nguyen, P.E., PTOE (M)
Pete observes that there are two big benefits from ITE that have each helped him significantly over the years: the technical resources, and networking with members. “In your early years—learn, learn, learn. Strive to become known as an expert in one or more fields. I had become JHK’s go-to guy for controller equipment; that led into being the principal investigator for a series of Federal Highway Administration training courses on signal controllers, and that led to writing an NCHRP synthesis on controller equipment—all before I was 35. Then, work to mentor the younger professionals coming after you. Share your experiences with them.”

The last five years have seen exciting changes as the Puerto Rico Section has really taken off, and merged with the Florida District to become the Florida Puerto Rico District. With the reorganization under ONE ITE, the Florida Section will be replaced with Chapters being elevated to Sections. The District meeting was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico late last year. Great things are ahead, thanks to dedicated leaders like Pete! 

2019 Florida Puerto Rico District Traffic Bowl.

Did You Know?
- In 2019, the Florida Puerto Rico District hosted their annual meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the first time it was hosted outside of Florida, and two short years after the catastrophic Hurricane Maria devastated the island.
- The District has reinvigorated their student engagement in the last few years, including the creation of three new Student Chapters. The District Board and members provide ongoing support to all the student chapters.
- In 2018, a Winter Workshop was hosted in conjunction with the first-in-the-State Student Leadership Summit at the University of Florida at Gainesville. The District is proud to continue to support the summits in the following two years and counting.
- A recurring event at District meetings is “Shark Tank” competition, which provides an opportunity for students to pitch their thesis as part of a request for “funding.” The process provides students with public speaking practice, learning to tell their story within the allotted time, and answering tough questions from potential “investors.”

Historical Perspective
- A Florida Section of the Institute of Traffic Engineers was formed in 1947, but later became inactive. The Florida Section was re-established in 1960 and celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.
- One ITE International President has hailed from Florida—John Freeman (2003). However, a number of Past Presidents have moved to Florida. ITE Past President Ed Mueller (1977) was a founder and initial president of the Florida Section in 1960. He also served as secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation, and was president of the Florida Transit Association in 1975.
- The Puerto Rico Section was established in 2005.