

Outlook

A quarterly publication by:



Winter 2016

"Your project. Our passion."

In This Issue:

THE ROAD MORE TRAVELED

Two roads diverged in a wood, though sorry he could not travel both, Robert Frost chose the road less traveled...and it made all the difference. With time for such introspection the great poet was obviously not on his way to work or picking up the kids from soccer practice.

Transportation planners and engineers face a similar, yet opposite dilemma today, trying to decide which should be the path most traveled. In recent years two philosophies of transportation have diverged. We have the Conventional approach, an automobile reliant system of freeways and arterial roadways and we have the Neotraditional approach seeking "Complete Streets" and multi-modal networks. Which path should we take? That is a good question.



Choosing the Conventional versus Neotraditional approach presents transportation planners and designers a critical dilemma.

After World War II mass production of automobiles made them affordable and a newly viable transportation alternative for many families and businesses. At this time, we also saw the implementation of Eisenhower's Interstate System which gave increased access to an expansive country proving a boon for commerce and the national economy. With such convenient access in place, land planning policies then focused on low-density suburban residential communities. Getting out of crowded urban cities was desirable and living in "suburbia" with large grassed lawns was a good thing. To accommodate the needs of the "suburbanites" retail began to follow, leaving the traditional urban core and giving rise to shopping

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The Road More Traveled



Bringing Bats into the Classroom



14th Annual Lovers Key Clean Up



Supporting Higher Education



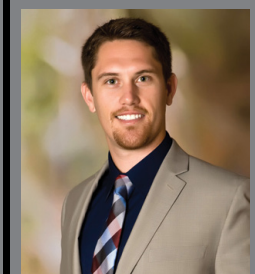
PEOPLE & PROJECTS: ON THE MOVE



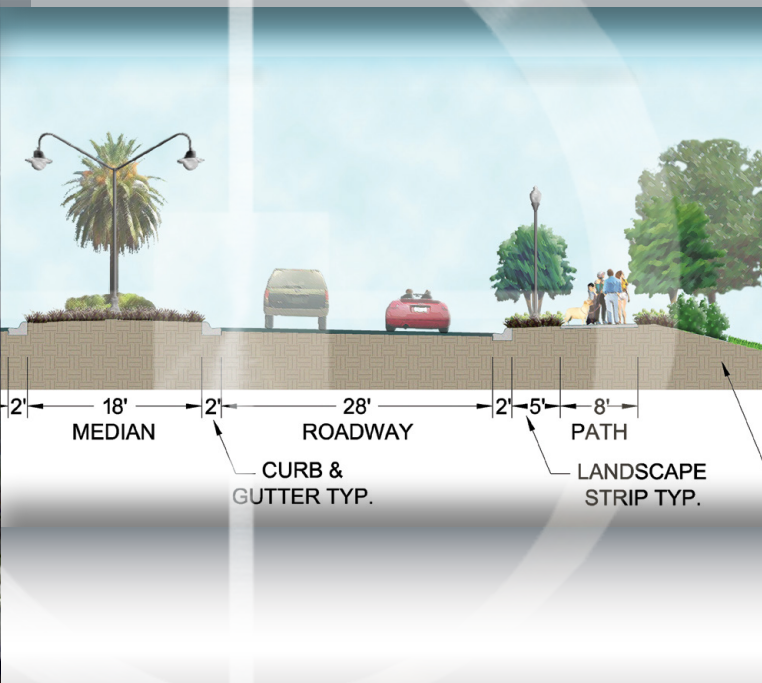
Erik Howard, P.E., P.S.M. has been named as a new company stockholder. He has been with Johnson Engineering for the last 13 years and serves as an engineer in the company's Water Resources market group.



Laura DeJohn, AICP has been named as a new company stockholder. She has been with the company for 12 years and is Director of the company's Planning and Landscape Architecture team.



Tyler Sharpe, P.E. in the company's Development group, has successfully earned his Professional Engineering license from the Florida Board of Professional Engineers.



malls and strip malls. Demand continued and increased automobile traffic required more freeways and arterial roadways to support the growth. New gated communities gave homeowners a sense of security but fewer access points made transportation reliant upon arterial roads generating congestion at their intersections.

Such conventional prosperity and growth gave way to “urban sprawl”, communities so spread out that effective transportation became impractical, delay and congestion became inevitable. Florida is especially affected in this regard. Many transplants from the North and Midwest came down to escape larger cities and cold winters. Living with a little grass between you and your neighbor, warm and secure behind a fence certainly has its appeal. We got what we wanted and have now realized maintaining such infrastructure is not easy or cheap, and continuing the practice indefinitely is unsustainable. So what do we do about it? We tried concurrency, the idea that development could not take place until adjoining roadways were brought to an acceptable level of service, i.e. pre-determined level of congestion, concurrent with the development. Concurrency was great in theory but not so much in practice as the solution was typically “build more lanes,” and the most qualified locations to develop according to the concurrency formula were the locations that were not congested, contributing to more sprawling low density development patterns. In some cases, more lanes may be the answer, but where does it stop? When have we reached a realistic and sustainable capacity?

In steps the Neotraditional approach. Synonymous with several other catchy monikers, such as New Urbanism, Sustainable Development, Smart Growth, etc., the approach shares the belief that a return to planning patterns and transportation modes that existed in traditional urban cities prior to World War II is our best bet. This school of thought advocates a holistic approach to mobility and “Complete Streets” that provide ample opportunity for alternate modes of transportation such as pedestrian, bicycle and transit so that we are not forced to rely on automobiles and developments are not forced to consume land with large parking lots. To reduce the reliance on arterial roadways Neotraditional planning promotes compact community development with increased density and integrated roadway networks with numerous smaller roads interconnected in grid fashion to allow more options in getting from point A to point B.

So which approach is correct? Should we continue to follow conventional methods and add more lanes to our existing roads or should we go back to what worked before automobiles were everywhere? The answer is both and neither. A key tenant in planning is “context sensitivity”, the idea that there is no one perfect answer and that the right thing to do all depends on where you are. This is critical in transportation. There is no blanket solution, the right thing to do depends on that unique set of circumstances and what is going to align with achieving the community’s overall vision for the future.

Cities and existing developed areas still need to be connected. If conveyance capacity is a problem, more lanes may very well be the solution. If you have congestion in an existing built-out area rather than blindly adding lanes, perhaps you should consider some strategic interconnections of existing roadways with some bicycle and pedestrian facility upgrades to provide a better network. If you have an existing multilane road in a declining neighborhood, perhaps instead of retaining that conveyance capacity a lane reduction with the addition of sidewalks and landscaping may better serve the community. The answer will not be the same for every situation.

Where planners and engineers go wrong is when they attempt to force a singular solution regardless of the context. We must remain open to multiple potential solutions. In reality, as communities grow, we come to many forks in the road. Choosing left or right, more traveled or less traveled, Conventional or Neotraditional, is not an easy decision, because it changes based on your circumstances and the community’s goals at the time. The prudent traveler, engineer and planner must evaluate each situation on its own merits before deciding which road to travel. From there we can affect the difference we are looking for.

For more information, contact Ryan Bell, P.E., PTOE at 239.461.3310 or rbell@johnsoneng.com. ■

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Prologue

While most people read it as a serious reflection of life’s decisions, Robert Frost wrote the “The Road Not Taken”, where this famous quote came from, as a joke. One of his best friends was a writer from England, Edward Thomas, and on walks through the woods, Thomas was very indecisive and would fret over decisions of which fork in the road to take, for fear he was going to take the wrong one. It was intended in good fun but the chronically depressed and unstable Thomas took it as his best friend mocking him and criticizing his indecisive nature which he considered a personal weakness. After reading this he decided to do something about it, rather than sticking with writing, which he was good at, he took the road less traveled and voluntarily joined the army during WWI. Later thrust into active duty, Thomas was sent to France and killed within two months of arriving. The road less traveled may in fact make all the difference, but it could be a very, very bad difference.

BRINGING BATS INTO THE CLASSROOM

In late October, just in time for Halloween, ecologist Gary Nychyk in the Johnson Engineering environmental group, gave a presentation about bats to three Lee County Florida public schools, Edison Park Elementary, Heights Elementary, and Lexington Middle School.

The presentation included an overview of bat characteristics, discussions on where they live, what they eat, what eats them, and an introduction to the Florida bonneted bat, which is listed as an Endangered Species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).



Prior to the presentations, the schools invited Johnson Engineering to deploy our ultrasonic recorder for 7-10 nights at the schools to collect bat call data, which allowed the students to learn about the bats that actually live in their own neighborhoods.

Gary was able to demonstrate the latest acoustic bat detection equipment (Song Meter SM4Bat ultrasonic bioacoustics recorders© by Wildlife Acoustics), which is able to record thousands of bat calls on site and allow the user to process and visualize those calls during discussions with permitting agencies. Using the ultrasonic recorders along with Kaleidoscope© and Anabat© software, students were able to see how the identifying traits of bat calls were used to help determine which species was recorded.

Johnson Engineering is a pioneer of using this specialized recording equipment in southern Florida to conduct passive acoustic surveys for the Florida bonneted bat as required by the USFWS. We can deploy up to seven Song Meter ultrasonic recorders, covering large projects much faster, and with more precision than other consultants.

In all, Gary presented to over 600 students from a total of 20 classes ranging from 2nd to 7th grade. The children asked lots of great questions after each presentation, showing that these young scientists were captivated by this interesting topic and perhaps will remain as one of their fond grade school memories.

For more information, contact Gary Nychyk at gnychyk@johnsoneng.com. ■



14TH ANNUAL COASTAL CLEAN UP CONTINUES TO HONOR OUR ROOTS

The community spirit is alive and well for 80 Johnson Engineering employees, their families, friends, the Friends of Lovers Key (FOLKS), and park staff. The dedicated group pitched in for the 14th consecutive year to preserve one of Florida’s natural gems, Lovers Key/Carl E. Johnson State Park.

This is an opportunity for Johnson Engineering employees to make a difference in the community while also paying tribute to the Company’s founder, Carl E. Johnson. Johnson Engineering’s Coastal Cleanup began in 2003 in honor of Carl E. Johnson, whose efforts in the late 1960s, played a major role in making this popular recreational area a reality. He conceived the idea of connecting the islands with a causeway from the south end of Fort Myers Beach to Bonita Beach, helped get most of the land donated from several large landowners, surveyed and designed the road, while overcoming a variety of obstacles along the way. Today, Lovers Key/Carl E. Johnson State Park has become a world-famous tourist destination.

This past October, we had more than 80 volunteers head to the park early on a Saturday morning. Our volunteers divided into groups, each led by FOLKS volunteers, and dedicated the morning to tackling various park projects such as replacing old stairs, painting, landscaping, removing exotic plants, planting native plants, and trail trimming. In past years, volunteers have built picnic tables, kiosks, and recycle bins, constructed access pathways, installed rope fencing, replaced weathered bridge planks, and much more. In one morning, our team knocked out projects that typically take park staff months to complete. Keeping the park looking its best promotes repeat tourism to the area.

The event concludes each year with a company BBQ in the beach pavilion, followed by an employee raffle of items donated by local Fort Myers businesses. For more information, contact Juli Kern at mkt@johnsoneng.com. ■



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SUPPORTING HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2005, the company established the Johnson Engineering Scholarship Endowed Fund to assist Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) students majoring in civil or environmental engineering in furthering their education.

Johnson Engineering has generously added \$13,000 to this endowment, bringing the total gift to \$50,000. Mr. Bill Rice, Senior Director of Advancement & Gift Planning University Advancement at FGCU accepted the additional donation on behalf of the university.

Johnson Engineering has a long history of providing engineering and design services for FGCU, dating back to its opening in 1991. Today, 10% of the company's employees are FGCU graduates. We look forward to continuing to build our relationship with the university, helping them through their growth, and supporting students in achieving higher education and a solid career path. ■



Johnson Engineering President Lonnie Howard, P.E. (left) and Fort Myers Development Director Dana Hume, P.E. (right), present a check to FGCU's Senior Director of Advancement & Gift Planning University Advancement, Bill Rice.

