With the holidays approaching in the upcoming weeks, we are all dreaming of enjoying Thanksgiving dinner with our families and finally taking some time off from work. While we are enjoying the holiday season, we should remember that the holidays are some of the busiest travel days of the year, which leads to more traffic incidents on the road. In this issue of TransTalk, we explore changing approaches in traffic safety and innovative Vision Zero initiatives in the Netherlands. This issue also features an interview with Professor Joseph Chow in which we discuss the future of the transportation industry. The ITE Met Section TransTalk Team wishes its readers a safe and happy holiday season!
Congratulations

EINAH REZA PELAEZ

Einah Reza Pelaez, P.E. has been elected the 2017 ITE Met Section Treasurer. Currently with HDR as the Deputy Traffic Section Manager, Einah has over 17 years of experience in the transportation industry.

Congratulations to Einah Pelaez!
FAMILIES FOR SAFE STREETS: CHANGING APPROACHES TO TRAFFIC SAFETY

By Brian Zumhagen, Communications Director, Transportation Alternatives

There was a time not so long ago when people who lost loved ones in a traffic crash or were themselves injured in a collision were left to work through their grief and pain largely on their own, with only close friends and family to turn to. What little coverage there was of these crashes treated them as merely personal “tragedies.”

That all began to change in New York City in the fall of 2013. After a series of horrific crashes that took the lives of several children, some of the parents devastated by these collisions came together with other New Yorkers who had suffered recent losses in communities across the city. Organized by the traffic safety advocates at Transportation Alternatives, these New Yorkers started a new group called Families for Safe Streets. As they began to tell their stories in the media, they started to change the way the public talked about traffic crashes.

The families’ objective was not only to honor the memory of their loved ones, but to turn their grief into action and convince elected officials and law enforcement to adopt a new approach to street safety. Inspired by the model of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, FSS began working to change the culture of acceptance around what group members make a point of referring to as “traffic violence.”

That violence is preventable, advocates from Families for Safe Streets and Transportation Alternatives emphasized to officials, pointing to a policy initiative from Sweden called Vision Zero.

It held that, through safer street design to better protect all road users, safety education and smart enforcement to target dangerous driving violations like speeding and failure to yield, it is possible to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries.

The advocates achieved a major victory by convincing then-candidate Bill de Blasio to make Vision Zero part of his transportation platform. After he took office in at the beginning of 2014, Mayor de Blasio, deeply affected by the powerful personal stories of Families for Safe Streets members, moved quickly to adopt Vision Zero as official City policy, establishing a multi-agency task force to coordinate traffic safety policy.

In the early months of the de Blasio administration, Families for Safe Streets worked with the City Council to pass a number of traffic safety bills and resolutions, including the Right of Way Law, a key Vision Zero tool that makes it easier for authorities to hold drivers accountable when they kill or injure someone who is legally in a crosswalk or bike lane. Crucial to that legislation’s passage was the wrenching and powerful Council testimony of FSS founding members Amy and Hsa-Pei Liao, whose 3-year-old daughter Allison Liao was struck and killed in 2013 in a Queens crosswalk while she was crossing the street with the light, hand-in-hand with her grandmother.

The personal stories of the Liaos and several other members of Families for Safe Streets has also changed the way state lawmakers look at traffic safety. Group members traveled to Albany in 2014 and won a safer 25 mph speed limit for New York City.

FSS has also won broad support for legislation that would allow the City to deploy more life-saving speed safety cameras and operate them 24 hours a day, to protect every school across the five boroughs from speeding, which kills more New Yorkers than drunk driving and cell phone use at the wheel combined.

When it comes to life-saving Vision Zero street redesigns, members of Families for Safe Streets have helped shape a number of ongoing projects around the city, including the transformation of Queens Boulevard, which was long known as the infamous “Boulevard of Death.” FSS founding member Lizy Rahman, whose son Asif was killed while biking on the boulevard, has been a tireless advocate for the protected bike lanes and pedestrian safety improvements now being installed along what officials now like to call “the Boulevard of Life” -- one that has, remarkably, seen zero fatalities during the past two years.

But even amid these accomplishments, the families have continued to bring their moral authority to the key role of watchdogging the Vision Zero effort, to make sure the City stays on track to meet its goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2024. With some key traffic safety statistics moving in the wrong direction this year (notably cyclist fatalities and hit-and-runs), group members have joined Transportation Alternatives to raise their voices in protest and call on Mayor de Blasio to make a greater investment to fix the most dangerous streets with safety improvements like protected bike lanes, curb extensions and pedestrian refuge islands to make crossing distances shorter.

WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US?

Since the beginning of 2015, there have been 209 people killed in areas the City has designated as Vision Zero Priority locations. That is about two-thirds of all crash deaths.

2002 44 NYC children aged 5-9 were fatally injured in a motor vehicle crash from 2002-2011, out of which 80% were pedestrians.

2011 16 Pedestrians were killed on the sidewalk.

2015 6 Pedestrians were killed on the sidewalk.

2016 22 People have been killed on the sidewalk since the beginning of 2015.

Families for Safe Streets has also continued work toward its broader goal of changing the way the public looks at -- and talks about -- traffic violence. Last year, the group launched a new campaign called “Crash Not Accident,” to drive home the point to journalists and public officials that the crashes that kill and maim too many people across the country are not inevitable “accidents,” but often come down to dangerous choices people make at the wheel.

As more cities across the nation adopt Vision Zero policies, Families for Safe Streets has played a key role by moving more and more Americans to think about the fact that crashes are preventable. That awareness has the power to change the driving culture, and make law enforcement and elected officials less likely to throw up their hands and accept the carnage on our streets as something that can’t be changed.
Can you walk us through your experience in the transportation industry?

I grew up in New York and I went to Cornell for undergrad. I did a Master's there so when I came out I had a civil engineering degree, but I was more interested in transportation topics. I got a chance to really see the field of traffic engineering and transportation planning, and just get a sense of where it was at. But at the same time I had a chance to also go down to TRB. I started going in 2004, and it really opened my eyes. I got a chance to see how many people are thinking about these problems and working on these issues, and how much bigger it is. It's not just dealing with traffic control and traffic design. It's transit, sustainability, resilience, environmental impacts, and it's a lot of different issues that really got me interested to learn more.

What are your thoughts on the direction of the industry?

It really interests me having been on both sides, from the industry to academia, I regularly interact with people in state-of-the-art technologies, like people working on self-driving vehicles, connected vehicles. We have a project at NYU with Professor Kaan Ozbay working with the USDOT to test 10,000 vehicles. We see a lot of these changes and it's funny that we talked about the trends of the industry. With traffic signals, when they first came around as a new technology, it was electrical engineers who developed that. Even transportation planning as a field, when it first emerged, was really part of an economist's domain as part of regional science. As it becomes more applied in practice, as transportation engineers, we packed that up. It was until the 1950s when we really developed this as a field. At that time, they placed it under civil engineering as a discipline, but it's a field that encompasses a lot of other areas—economics, computer science, statistics—it's a lot more multidisciplinary. The trend right now is a lot of new technologies that are transforming the basic transportation technologies such that our role as transportation engineers is now to operate them to get them into society. We'll see more of this as we change and adapt ourselves to understand how these technologies work better for society.

You teach a course entitled “Network Design Methods.” What is this about?

This would be a follow-up to a course where I cover ways to optimize networks, which is my area of expertise. Like, how do you design a route so that it maximizes movements for users. In the case of merging and expanding vehicles, how do you optimize that? How do you do it dynamically? How do you do it in real time with information? How do you do that with incomplete information? You have to account for randomness and build in a learning process. So, how do you learn from the information? So, those types of topics are what I cover.

Do you think courses such as “Network Design Methods” are applicable to professionals?

Yes. What we want to do is develop professional workshops and training sessions. Just last week, we had an Integrated Corridor Management workshop. I can see how people could be doing more of these workshops and looking at more advanced data analytic methods which could be useful for professionals. And, as we train the students who then join the workforce, that will enhance the knowledge base on the industry side. In some schools, they provide executive courses which are short (1-2 week) courses that cover one topic in depth for professionals. Right now at the engineering school at NYU, we’re reviving this center for urban intelligent transportation systems. We’re trying to put together facilities so we would have the right resources to run this workshops later on. So hopefully the Center for Urban ITS will be used to train professionals as well.

We talked a lot about how professionals can adapt by being more involved in academia. How do you think people in academia can adapt?

I think a lot of the academics are seen as being in their ivory tower. I think with transportation engineering, I see that’s less of an issue. We’re very involved with public agencies and private industry. I think we need to communicate the research findings more, take on local leadership, get involved in local issues, and be available to answer questions. And in some ways, the courses I teach, I try to relate the current news topics to what we’re doing so the students are aware of how to relate the topics to what’s in the news.
In recent years, cities across North America including New York have turned to Europe for new, innovative ideas to make their streets safer, more livable, and more pedestrian-friendly. Many cities have adopted the European traffic safety model of Vision Zero as a guide to design streets with traffic safety as a top priority. The idea of Vision Zero first originated from Sweden in the late 1990s, putting the responsibility on policymakers and traffic engineers to design streets and intersections toward the elimination of all traffic fatalities. Since implementation, the results in Sweden have been remarkably successful. The nation has reduced its traffic fatality rate by more than half since 1997, and the traffic fatality rate in Stockholm, Sweden, has been reduced to only a fraction of that of New York City.

Other nations across Europe have made strides as well, and some have adopted variations of Vision Zero as a means of shifting paradigms toward street designs that prioritize traffic safety. The Netherlands adopted a comprehensive Sustainable Safety Program in the 1990s, and has been similarly successful in improving traffic safety nationwide. The total number of annual traffic fatalities in the nation is now only one-quarter of the number of fatalities in the 1970s. While the main stated goal of Vision Zero is to reduce all traffic fatalities where possible, the Dutch Sustainable Safety Program emphasizes several street design objectives to reduce traffic fatalities:

- The establishment of a hierarchy of roadway functions to categorize roads into different functions such as high level roads, arterials, and local roads that will each have different safety features in their design.
- A physical separation of different modes that have a significant difference in speed or mass (i.e. cars, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians), as much as possible.
- A continuous, consistent, easily identifiable, and predictable design for all road users in order to minimize human error and to better communicate the intent of the street’s design.

Examples of this approach in practice can be seen on Google Maps on any street in a major Dutch metropolitan area. As one example, Van der Hooplaan Street in the suburbs of Amsterdam has a clear delineation between the main road and the service road, both visually and in the road surfacing.

The service road carries more local traffic at lower speeds, is adjacent to a number of residential uses, and has more frequent interaction with users of non-motorized modes. The installation of concrete pedestrian refuge islands serve as traffic calming devices and provide additional visual cues for drivers to travel at reasonable speeds and to be mindful of pedestrian crossings. This is a striking contrast with the typical streetscape of most North American suburbs. Streets that serve higher speed traffic or heavier vehicles, unlike this particular street, will still have dedicated infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians, but are designed with greater physical separation.

Streets in the Netherlands were not always designed with safety of all road users as a priority. One particular example is the Maaststraat in Downtown Amsterdam, shown in the before and after photographs below. In the 1960s, the design primarily served the efficient flow of automobiles and the convenience for drivers to find available parking. Today, the street has been re-designed with safety as a priority, as traffic calming measures have been implemented with improved infrastructure for non-motorized road users and more visual cues for drivers to travel at speeds that are more appropriate for the neighborhood. Because nearby land uses consist of a residential neighborhood and a university, interactions between automobiles and non-motorized traffic are frequent, making the current Maaststraat design more appropriate, more context-sensitive, and safer for all roadway users.

This prioritization of traffic safety in street design has promoted less reliance on the automobile in many Dutch cities and improved perception of alternative modes of transportation. Many cities in the Netherlands have remarkably high non-motorized splits. In Groningen, a remarkable 61 percent of all trips in the city are made by bicycle, the highest of any city in the world. The success of the Dutch “Sustainable Safety” approach in reducing traffic fatalities shows that there are variations of Sweden’s “Vision Zero” model that have also been successful at attaining the same safety and livability related goals. The paradigm shift from an approach to only benefit the flow of vehicular traffic to one that prioritizes the safety of all roadway users was a shared vision of the Netherlands and Sweden toward their notable reductions in traffic fatalities.
Mohammed Masoor Hasan

Shortly after earning his Masters Degree in Transportation Engineering from NJIT, Masoor was introduced to SIMCO’s Traffic Engineering Department Manager at the Past Presidents ITE meeting in January 2016. As a result of subsequent discussions, Masoor started his professional career with SIMCO Engineering, PC, in March 2016. During his tenure at SIMCO, he has worked on a variety of projects in their growing Transportation Planning Group including traffic analysis and modeling work on the Bronx Psychiatric Center Redevelopment EIS, Manhattan Bridge – South Upper Roadway Redecking, Hudson Tunnel Project Planning and Environmental Services, and the 4th Avenue Line Structural Repairs and Rehabilitation projects.

Shortly after joining SIMCO, it became apparent that Masoor also had an interest in graphic design. Leveraging his passion and talent, Masoor has designed new Marketing pamphlets, assisted with the company website, prepared a presentation board for an Awards Submission, as well as many other smaller projects for SIMCO. In addition, Masoor has made significant contributions to the ITE Met Section’s Newsletter Committee as he completed substantial tasks with very tight deadlines while producing some fantastic looking Newsletters!

The Young Member Spotlight features dedicated volunteers and celebrates their contributions to the ITE Met Section.

To nominate a member for their commitment to ITE, please submit your recommendation to lkim@akrf.com.
A WORD FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR

I can honestly say that I walked away from the first meeting a bit overwhelmed, not only from meeting so many new folks, but the extensive and challenging agenda the board, guided by President Paula Benway and Executive Director Jeff Panza, has taken on. I’m very impressed with Jeff and you’ll get an opportunity to meet him as he addresses us at the January Past Presidents meeting as our guest speaker. It seems like everything about how ITE portrays itself – from the technical coordinating councils, membership campaigns, communication services through the ITE Community Board and Learning Hub Webinars, the use of Social Media, the ITE Journal, and the ITE Spotlight series – has been energized.

Leadership ITE and the professional partnerships they are engaging with has made it clear to me that perhaps the past lethargy that I heard about is gone and has been replaced with a highly motivated and committed staff and board that is genuinely invigorating the institute.

For my part, I was asked to participate and eventually chair the Membership committee so I’ll provide you more information on that in the coming years. I can tell you that there’s finally an uptick in new members after many years of gradual decline. We were up by 600 new members over 2015; we had an 85% rate of retention and 300 people rejoined through the Institute’s rejoin campaign.

Lastly, one reason why the Institute is getting back on its feet financially was the extremely well attended, and thus financially successful, International Meeting in Anaheim. The Institute is trying to follow this model more frequently as the coming years, where the meeting coincides with the local district’s annual meeting at the same time, so as not to compete with a local member’s ability to attend both meetings. So, do you know that next year’s meeting will be held in Toronto to coincide with District 8, the Canadian District’s Annual meeting in late July? As the closest ITE District to Toronto, we need to start having our members thinking about attending this relatively close meeting – and to keep the momentum going, with successful attendance. July is really not that far away – start planning and remember to make sure your passport is up to date. A call for abstracts has already be sent out – so plan ahead and let’s make the Northeastern District a standout in attendance and technical presentations.
ITE MET SECTION MONTHLY MEETINGS AND EVENTS

4TH ANNUAL EMERGING LEADERS CONFERENCE

Written by Brad Miller, ITS/Traffic Project Manager, Michael Baker International

On October 10, 2016, the ITE Met Section’s Mentorship Committee hosted the fourth annual Emerging Leaders Conference. The event, which was co-sponsored by ITS-NJ, was held at NJIT’s Campus Center Atrium in Newark, New Jersey. The conference facilitated the ability for emerging professionals in the transportation industry’s to interact with both private and public sector veterans of the industry. The conference provided an excellent networking opportunity for employers to recruit motivated students, many of which came prepared with resumes in hand.

The conference kicked off with an introduction from William Kingland, NJDOT Assistant Commissioner of Transportation Systems Management and was followed by keynote speech from NJIT President Dr. Joel Bloom. Dr. Bloom discussed the importance of the transportation industry and its influence on the world as well as Intelligent Transportation Systems and other emerging technologies. Following Dr. Bloom’s discussion, Matthew Powers, a General Manager from Uber, highlighted Uber’s emerging technologies. Mr. Powers provided insight on trends and developments including partnerships with the public sector.

The capstone to the conference was the highly anticipated Leadership Panel that compiled a diverse collection of transportation experts with extensive experience and insight in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of transportation infrastructure and facilities. ITE Met Section Mentorship Committee co-chair Brad Miller moderated the panel which included Luigi Caninelli, Stephen Dilts, Paul Eng-Wong, William Kingland, Nady Moeini, Amir Zaravi, Tra Vu, and Kirk Weaver. The topics of the lively and interactive dialogue ranged from emerging technologies such as connected and autonomous vehicles, to hiring strategies and career opportunities. Numerous insightful and engaging questions were asked by the audience.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

The ITE Met Section September meeting was held on Thursday, September 15 at Jericho Terrace. Phillip Eng spoke on NYSDOT’s efforts to accelerate the completion of major projects. Joseph Brown spoke about the complexities of construction along Route 9A adjacent to the World Trade Center.

TRANSPORTATIONCAMP NYC

2016 TransportationCamp was held on Saturday, September 24 at City College – Shepard Hall. There were over 450 attendees from every sector: including academic, private, public, and industry. ITE Met Section was a proud sponsor and several ITE members were part of the organization team.

OCTOBER MEETING

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