

SECTION MEETING SCHEDULE 2020-21 – JUST AROUND THE CORNER...

Following our April meeting, our last Section event of the season will be our annual Spring Social. This will be conducted virtually on **Thursday, May 13**. More details will be provided in the May edition of *THE NEWS*.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS MEETING

Do you know about ASCE's Government Relations? Have you heard the term "Key Contact" but not really sure what it means? For answers to these and other questions you may have on this, please plan to join us for a lunch-time session which will be led by **Caroline Sevier**, ASCE National's Director of Government Relations. During this session you will learn more about government relations, how it applies to our profession, and how you can help influence Civil Engineering legislation on all levels of government.

This meeting will be conducted on **Tuesday, April 27**, starting at **12 Noon**, and will be a virtual event.

Please watch for registration information which will be included in upcoming e-blasts.

WEBINAR/MEETING LIBRARY

Please don't forget that you are still able to catch the Section virtual meetings and presentations you may have missed this season and potentially earn a PDH if the particular session offered this. The **Webinar Library** on teach:able is available at <https://virtual.asce-philly.org/>. The best part is that it is **FREE** to all dues-paying Section members as an added benefit of membership in our Section.

But, keep in mind, your free access will have ended on March 30 if you have not renewed your Section dues for 2021.

ASCE VISION

*Civil Engineers are global leaders
building a better quality of life.*

ASCE MISSION

*Provide essential value to our members
and partners, advance Civil Engineering,
and serve the public good.*

APRIL SECTION MEETING

Philadelphia Section, American Society of Civil Engineers

THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING PRESENTATION – 12:00 NOON to 1:00 PM

As has been done for the past several years, this meeting will consist of "breakout" sessions on three separate topics.

RESERVATION DEADLINE – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14. There is no cost for ASCE members to attend this presentation. Non-ASCE members will be charged \$15. When registering, please have your ASCE ID number available. Your membership will need to be current for you to be able to register for the event as a member.

Reservations can be made through our website (www.asce-philly.org) and paid via PayPal or by check as applicable. Checks, made payable to "Philadelphia Section ASCE", can be mailed as instructed when you register. After you register you will receive information and instructions on how to access this meeting on your computer or device.

There will be a choice of three separate sessions as described below. Meeting attendees will be assembled in one "room" for the meeting start and announcements and then will be dispersed to the session of their choice. It is anticipated that each session will be eligible for one Professional Development Hour (PDH) credit.

Session 1 – Sponsored by the Delaware Valley Geo-Institute (DVGI)

TOPIC: Geotechnical Aspects of Earthen Construction and Soil-Based Construction Methods

PRESENTER: Miguel Pando, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Geotechnical Engineering, Department of Civil, Architectural and Environmental Engineering, Drexel University

Earthen construction and soil-based construction materials are used worldwide. This method encapsulates many different and varied forms of techniques and applications. As a vernacular solution, it has developed over many thousands of years in all inhabited continents of the world. In many rural regions of Africa, Asia and South America, it remains the predominant building solution. Recently its popularity has increased as it offers the potential for a low carbon footprint and sustainability benefits through recycling and as an alternative to high energy materials such as fired masonry.

Earthen materials including adobe and rammed earth are manufactured using local base soils and empirically based manufacturing techniques. These materials have rarely been studied using a geotechnical approach, and there is a general lack of recognition of the key mechanisms at work mechanically and hydraulically. In this presentation Dr. Pando will provide a review of geotechnical aspects of soil-based construction materials and a summary of recent and ongoing research with colleagues from the Structures and Heritage Research Group at the Catholic University including the case history of an ancient massive earthen heritage structure of the moche culture in Peru.

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SPRING SOCIAL & DINNER DANCE

Philadelphia Section, American Society of Civil Engineers

THURSDAY, MAY 13, 2021

More details will be provided in the May edition of *THE NEWS*.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Spring!! For me, this season seems to bring not only sunshine and warmth but also hope. Hope to finally be able to connect with friends and family in person, hope to finally be able to pass by and wave hello to co-workers in the office hallway, and hope for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. While these are things we are all hopeful for, we need to be mindful that there are steps we each can take to make this hope a reality. We need to continue to protect others and ourselves by continuing to follow the CDC and local government's COVID-19 guidelines, get vaccinated when we are eligible, and continue to social distance and wear masks when around others not vaccinated.

CDC guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

PA guidelines: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Philadelphia guidelines: <https://www.phila.gov/programs/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/>

Given the current CDC and local government guidelines, we will be unable to host our annual Spring Social in person this year but given our success at our 1st Virtual Social (Welcome Back Social and Awards held in September 2020), we are ready to provide a bigger and better **2nd Virtual Social!** So be sure to mark your calendars for the evening of **Thursday, May 13th** and be on the lookout for more details in the upcoming weeks.

While we are nearing the end of our year, we still have numerous events planned in the next month including our **2nd Virtual Multi-Technical Meeting** on **April 15th** and an **ASCE Government Relations Meeting** on **April 27th**. Speaking of Government Relations, as reported last month, it is nice to see infrastructure being talked about and considered on such a large scale. While we know politically the proposed federal bills will encompass much more than what us Civil Engineers can manage and handle, having a definite and positive plan of attack on this is exactly what we need to do the job and do it correctly. **We would reiterate that now is the opportune time to reach out to your elected representatives and introduce yourself as an infrastructure expert.** We know they rely on the knowledge and experience of professionals who are exposed and understand the needs of infrastructure, and your guidance and advice certainly cannot hurt.

We will continue to provide updates on the 2021 Report Card and potential infrastructure improvement bills that we, the experts, can assist in making the most positive impact and continue to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public while improving the quality of life for all humanity. We are also looking forward to starting the update process on the 2022 Report Card for Pennsylvania's Infrastructure; if you have an interest in being part of that process, please contact me.

It is hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since I was sworn in for this position but here we are with 1 month left in our 2020-2021 ASCE year. While it has been a challenging year, it has also been a productive and exciting one. I have enjoyed it all and will reflect more on that next month, along with the recognizing our current and next year's Officers and Board members.

As always, check out our website for upcoming events and hope to (virtually) see you all at one soon!

Best,
Jen Reigle, PE
President, ASCE Philadelphia Section
jreigle@pennoni.com | 215-254-7723

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS AND AGENCY PARTNERS

We thank those firms who have made the financial commitment to Section Sponsorship for this season. The business cards of these 14 firms are included in the sponsor section of *THE NEWS*. Sponsor logos are also displayed in a special Sponsors section of our website. Through a click on the particular sponsor's logo, we provide direct links to its own website so prospective employees can review all available and up-to-date positions being offered by that firm. Sponsors can additionally provide a profile article in *THE NEWS*.

If you have an interest in joining our sponsorship program, please contact **Bob Wright** at newseditor@asce-philly.org for more details.

Also, as you may be aware, our Section has

begun our informal recognition of government and quasi-government agencies for the assistance they have provided us. We will cite them by name for the remainder of this season but will add their logos to our new Agency Partners section next season. We are proud to cite the initial "crop" of Agency Partners:

- Amtrak
- City of Philadelphia Department of Streets
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, District 6-0
- Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

**ASCE, PHILADELPHIA SECTION
OFFICERS AND BOARD OF
DIRECTION — 2020-21 SEASON**

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**In accordance with our Constitution and Bylaws, only the immediate Past President will serve on the Board, and only for a one-year term. We show the most recent three Past Presidents as has become our tradition.*

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**COPY DEADLINE FOR
MAY 2021 ISSUE
APRIL 16, 2021**

YOUNGER MEMBER FORUM NEWS

Assunta Daprano, Forum Editor

Katrina Lawrence, Forum President 2020-21
Pennoni, klawrence@pennoni.com

K-12 OUTREACH RECAPS

February & March

NORTH PENN HIGH SCHOOL

K-12 Outreach Chairs **CJ Medora** and **Christian Antisell** were joined by **Dani Schroeder** of Pennoni, **Mohammed Alshilihi** of NJDOT, and **Kolleen Backlund** of GEI Consultants, Inc. for this event. Our volunteers spoke to students across all grade levels about Civil Engineering and answered questions during the panel session.

SAMUEL FELS HIGH SCHOOL

K-12 Outreach Chairs **CJ Medora** and **Christian Antisell** were joined by **Tim Abel** of Pennoni, **Kolleen Backlund** of GEI Consultants, Inc., **Kevin Brown** of Urban Engineers, and **Caroline Voigtsberger** of Pennoni. Our volunteers spoke to a 9th grade algebra class about Civil Engineering and answered questions during the panel session.

CHESTER COUNTY FUTURES

K-12 Outreach Chair **CJ Medora** was joined by **Will Cowan** of WSP and **John Doyle** of Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. for this event. Our volunteers spoke to after-school program students across all grade levels about Civil Engineering and answered questions during the panel session.

ABINGTON FRIENDS SCHOOL

K-12 Outreach Chairs **CJ Medora** and **Christian Antisell** were joined by **Alyssa Pizzi** of TranSystems, **Daniel Bhaumik** of Carroll Engineering, and **Caroline Merrill** of Temple ASCE for this event. Our volunteers spoke to students across all grade levels about Civil Engineering and answered questions during the panel session.

STEPPINGSTONE SCHOLARS

K-12 Outreach Chair **CJ Medora** was joined by **Kolleen Backlund** of GEI Consultants, Inc., **Mohamed Asker** of Villanova Law, **Sabrina**

Mamo of Carroll Engineering, and **Alyssa Pizzi** of TranSystems for this event. The volunteers spoke to students from Grades 5 to 9 about Civil Engineering and conducted hands on workshops spread among four breakout rooms.

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers!

NEW SERIES: LUNCH BREAK!

MARCH 3

YMF hosted its first **Monthly Lunch Break** event of our ongoing four-part series. During the 40-minute event, attendees enjoyed their lunches at home while listening to four entertaining and informative presentations.

Kirsten Brown of Urban Engineers opened the floor with a presentation on **Cool Engineering in Colombia**. She took us through a slideshow of her 2018 trip to South America, including the many engineering features she encountered, as well as the beautiful villages and natural scenery. She noted the difference in construction safety standards as compared to those we encounter in America, too.

Paige Glassman of Traffic Planning and Design followed with **Cats as Coworkers: An Informational Guide**. She entertained us with cute pictures of her two cats, Thelma and Louise, while comparing their antics to those of her coworkers. "You always have someone watching you," she reminded.

Next, the attendees heard from **Mary Pat Tumelty** of Pennoni with her vibrant presentation on **How to Fake Having a Green Thumb**. While dressed in a floral shirt fit for the occasion, she went through a slideshow on the many different types of plants she cares for, as well as some tips and tricks to keeping each species alive. She added, "I actually thought I bought a plastic plant, but it turned out to be real."

Lastly, the event closed with a presentation on Understanding Stock Options by **Joe Natale** of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Joe provided a clear and concise overview of the terminology associated with stock options, and went through a few examples to demonstrate how they work. Joe cautions that "This is not financial advice."

The event was well received by the participants who kept the chat box active with comments and questions throughout the presentations! We would like to thank our four presenters for their outstanding slideshows and for sharing their experiences and wisdom with the ASCE Community.

NEWS FROM NATIONAL

2021 REPORT CARD FOR AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE



Check out the newly released 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, which was made public by ASCE National on March 3!

With an overall GPA of C-, outside of the D range earned over the last 20 years, we have made incremental progress toward restoring our nation's infrastructure. The 2021 grades range from a B in rail to a D- in transit. Five category grades — aviation, drinking water, energy, inland waterways, and ports — went up, while just one category — bridges — went down. And stormwater infrastructure received its first grade: a disappointing D. Overall, eleven category grades were stuck in the D range, a clear signal that our overdue bill on

infrastructure is a long way from being paid off.

Also, the four ASCE Pennsylvania Sections will combine "forces" and update our PA Report Card for release next year. The process has started and volunteers are welcome to help the effort. Please let us know at info@asce-philly.org if you are interested in being part of this effort.

WE ARE PROUD TO CITE OUR 2021 SECTION AWARD NOMINEES

Our Section Awards will be presented at our Annual Spring Social and Dinner Dance on May 13. More information and details on the Social, which will be a virtual event as last year (although it will be in the spring this time around) will be included in the May edition of THE NEWS.

We received a number of strong nominations for Section Awards this year and the Awards Committee had the not-so-easy task to review the submissions and prepare a recommended slate of Award recipients. The recommended recipients have been approved by our Section Board of Directors. They are:

- **Archie Filshill**, Aero Aggregates - Philadelphia Civil Engineer of the Year
- **Timothy Abel**, Pennoni - Philadelphia Young Civil Engineer of the Year
- **Richard Martino**, Modjeski & Masters - Structural Engineer of the Year
- **Frederick "Rick" Brinker**, Pennoni - Geotechnical Engineer of the Year
- **Donald Gusic**, CDM Smith - Engineering Manager of the Year
- **Mohamed Elghawy**, Traffic Planning & Design - Construction Engineer of the Year
- **Andrew Bechtel**, College of New Jersey - Educator of the Year
- **Lindsay Chateauvert**, Amtrak - Young Government Engineer of the Year
- **Elizabeth Baldwin**, City of Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections - Government Service Award
- **Sean McCreesh**, Pennoni - Community Outreach and Service Award

We hope you will be able to join us at the Social to honor our Awardees for this year.

More information on our awardees will be included in our October edition of THE NEWS.

N-ASCE*

REPORT: STOP LINES DO LITTLE TO ENCOURAGE DRIVERS TO STOP

Since there is honor among thieves, there should similarly be honor among editors. Not that we have anything at all in common with thieves – we might borrow, but we always give credit, but we don't give back what we take (so maybe we editors do have more in common with thieves than we think...) Our colleague Dean Kaiser, the Editor of the MASITE Interconnect, the newsletter of the Mid-Atlantic Section of ITE, published this recently (borrowing it from the source www.route-fifty.com) and agreed to allow us to republish it here (so no thievery...). From our experience on the roads, it seems not too many drivers know what these things actually are, so it's hard to blame people for not stopping at them.

Stop lines, the thick white bars painted ahead of intersections to indicate where cars should be stopped, are largely ineffective at preventing crashes and also don't do a great job of getting drivers to hit the brakes, according to the results of a 14-year study in Minnesota. The study, conducted by the Minnesota Local Road Research Board, examined crash and traffic data from a handful of locations from 2004 to 2018, including video clips from 16 intersections both before and after the installation of a stop line. The results showed that stop lines “showed no association with crash occurrence,” and were useful in decreasing accidents only occasionally, in conjunction with other factors, “especially the presence of a painted crosswalk.”

The lines, also known as stop bars, were likewise unhelpful in keeping drivers from pulling their cars too far into intersections. According to an analysis of video footage, drivers tended to stop on or up to 10 feet past the location of the stop line, both before and after installation. “In fact, it is reliably determined that the more space there is between the stop line and the absolute edge of the conflicting driving lane, the more drivers ignore the stop line and push forward,” researchers wrote.

Stop lines are between 1 and 2 feet wide and are traditionally used at intersections with poor visibility to keep drivers from rolling their cars beyond the curb to look around the corner, though they're also used in conjunction with stop signs and crosswalks, and in places where it's not obvious where a vehicle should stop. Drivers are not required by law to pause at stop bars, and they're not used at every intersection, though citizens often request them at “intersections with frequent stop sign violations,” according to a technical summary of the report.

Despite their ubiquity, there's been little research on the efficacy of stop lines — “its benefits are assumed, not proven,” the researchers wrote. [*We know the word “efficacy” much more familiarly these days, having heard it quite a bit in reference to the Covid vaccines – Ed.*] Transportation officials in Minnesota were curious about the “definitive effects” of the lines, which aren't expensive to install but can cost thousands of dollars to maintain over time, particularly in the Midwest, where harsh winters require frequent repainting. The city of Edina, for example, estimated that “the maintenance of latex paint stop lines at an intersection costs around \$1,000 per year,” according to the report.

While the study results found that stop lines alone did not reduce crashes, researchers did note that the bars were somewhat effective at getting drivers to reduce their speed while approaching an intersection—even if they still didn't

SECTION COMMITTEES

Our Section runs very well and it is mainly a result of the dedication and service of our many volunteers, both our Officers and Board Members as well as our various Committees. While many of you know the former group well, you may not be all that aware of the latter. Our Committees address many of our regular and ongoing issues and keep our Section vibrant and in the forefront of service to our membership. A list of our Committees and chairs for this season is provided below. We would like to thank all of these folks for their contributions and diligence in helping our Section do what it does.

Additionally, if you have a particular interest in helping the Section as a Committee volunteer, please reach out to us at info@asce-philly.org or through our Section Secretary, **Jesse Gormley** (contact information is provided on page 2).

Audit – Mohamed Elghawy

Awards – Bob Wright

Engineers Week Hall of Fame Recognition – Ruben David

Budget and Finance – Joe Natale

Civil Engineers in Government – Jeanien Wilson

College Scholarship – Scott Cepietz

Communications – Jesse Gormley

E-mail Outreach – Jeanien Wilson

Webmaster – Greg Dunn

Facebook – Joe Natale, Michael DeVuono

Newsletter – Bob Wright

Sponsorship – Bob Wright

Continuing Education – Mohamed Elghawy

Humphrey Fund – John Zarsky

Membership – Andrew Bechtel

Mural – Angelo Waters

Nominating (for Board Positions) – Jen Reigle

Program – Briana Pampuch

Venue Coordination – Troy Illig

Check-in/Name Tags – Nha Truong

Society Relations – Cathy Farrell

Region 2 Director – Jack Raudenbush

Region 2 Governors – Greg Kuklinski, Carol Martsof, Joe Platt, Pat Sullivan

Region 2 Younger Member Representative – Joe Natale

PA Council – Cathy Farrell, Bob Wright

Legislative Affairs – Spencer Finch

Spring Social – Troy Illig

Subsidiary Groups – Mohamed Elghawy

Construction Management – Bob Wright

Delaware Valley GeoInstitute – Russ Preuss

Environmental and Water Resources – Eric Lindhult

Structural Engineering Institute – James Deeney

Transportation and Development Institute – Bill Thomsen

Younger Member Forum – Katrina Lawrence

stop entirely. “Although there was no significant effect observed between the presence of a stop line and the decision of drivers to come to a complete stop instead of performing a ‘rolling’ stop, the presence of the stop line reduced the roll speed for some vehicles,” the report said. “In most cases, the extreme high speeds were greatly reduced.”

Based on those findings, stop lines may not be the most effective method of influencing drivers' behaviors, the report concludes. The researchers said that their hope is that their findings “will serve as a reference for Planners and Engineers when considering placement of a stop line at one or many intersections.”

To add to this, it is your Editor's experience that in some parts of our country stop lines are not commonly installed – only where there is a specific reason to have this further back from an intersection than normal, because of turning traffic and other considerations – and student drivers are taught to stop in a spot in which they can see the nearest crosswalk line over the hoods of their vehicles.

Having worked in transportation his entire career, from his observations, your Editor often theorized that the stop bar is where the second car in line generally stops, as the first car is usually way into the crosswalk. At least in our neck of the woods...

*N-ASCE – Not always something concerning Engineering...

MARCH SECTION MEETING

March 11, 2021

Virtual/Zoom

New Acela Trainset Facility Modifications and Storage Tracks

By Robert Wright, Editor

Spring came a little early with a new high temperature record set on this day, even though technically there were nine days of winter to be had before the “real” change in seasons and end of winter. It was a little welcome with us being inside for so long with colder weather, despite the reality of the lockdown still in place (but some good news on that front was being shared in the media as well). Ironically, the less scientific information received from one Punxsutawney Phil just over a month before this meeting was that winter would go a little longer, and it did. (Note to self – stop relying on Gus, PA’s second most famous groundhog, for these predictions...)

Now that the weather report is over, it was hard to believe that our last in-person meeting was almost exactly a year before, when the virus warnings were first starting to come out and we had a noticeably sparse crowd at Maggiano’s with the resultant confusion on what was happening and coming. In any event, we were able to meet virtually once again this day, changing things up to an evening event for the first time in 2021 and the first since November. A group of over 90 attendees gathered ‘round their computer screens, joined once again by our counterparts from the Delaware Valley Section of the American Society of Highway Engineers

(ASHE), to hear about Amtrak’s new high-speed rail fleet and how it would be supported and sustained as it arrives to take the place of the first generation Acela trains.

President Jen Reigle got things started with a few announcements and handed off to Steve DiSciullo of ASHE for some updates on its activities. The Temple University Student Chapter was spotlighted at this meeting, and Chapter Co-President Emily DeLuca presented a short summary of activities and events that the Chapter has managed to conduct despite being able to do so only virtually. Following that, President-Elect Briana Pampuch introduced the featured speaker, Chris Gray, Principal Project Manager with Amtrak, for his presentation.

Mr. Gray showed a video which outlined the Avelia program, the second generation of Amtrak’s high-speed trainsets for the Northeast Corridor being built by Alstom. He noted that the “next Acela” sets were currently in production, with a test train currently operating but not ready to carry passengers just yet. There were several other “pieces of the puzzle” that were in process for the acceptance and support of the new fleet. These parallel activities include testing, safety training, planning/phasing, IT systems, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) authorizations

APRIL MEETING

Continued from Page 1

Session 2 – Sponsored by the Structural Engineering Institute (SEI)

TOPIC: The Capitol Visitor Center Construction

PRESENTERS: Luca Barison, Nicholson Construction Company;
Giovanni Bonita, Ph.D., PE, P.ENG., PG,
GEI Consultants, Inc.

The proposal for a Capitol Visitor Center began to crystallize in the mid-1970’s with the issuance of the Architect of the Capitol’s report, “Toward a Master Plan for the United States Capitol.” In 1991, Congress authorized funding for conceptual planning and design of a visitor center. In 1995, the design report was issued.

Changes in security needs, as underscored by the tragic murder of two Capitol police officers in 1998, and other safety and accessibility considerations required revisiting and revalidating the 1995 report. The updated plan was presented to the U.S. Capitol Preservation Commission in October 1999. Decisions by the Capitol Preservation Commission led to the start of pre-construction activities in the fall of 2001.

The events of September 11, 2001 necessitated additional design changes and prompted Congress to provide the necessary funding to move the project into construction. Actual construction began in 2002. By the fall of 2003, excavation was essentially complete and build-up of the structure began. Personnel began to

occupy the building in July 2008 and it was dedicated and opened to the public on December 2, 2008. Since its opening, millions of people have visited the Capitol, entering through the Capitol Visitor Center.

Session 3 – Co-sponsored by the Transportation and Development Institute (TDI) and the Construction Technical Group; special co-sponsor, Women’s Transportation Seminar (WTS), Philadelphia Chapter

TOPIC: SEPTA 5th Street Station

Restoration

PRESENTERS: John McElwee, Senior Program Manager, SEPTA; Erica Antoine, Engineer of Record, Burns Engineering, Inc.

The 5th Street-Independence Hall Station of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority’s (SEPTA) Market-Frankford Line was part of the original Market Street Subway-Elevated, Philadelphia’s first rapid transit line, and was opened to passengers in 1908. It was extensively rehabilitated for the nation’s bicentennial in 1974-76, with elevators added to make it accessible to riders with disabilities in 2003. Recent improvements, constructed between April 2019 and March 2021, include new head-houses and curb bumpouts at street level, waterproofing, structural repairs, system upgrades and updates, and new architectural finishes at the platform level. This presentation will highlight the project’s challenges and lessons learned during the design and construction phases on this 110-plus year-old facility.

and approvals, infrastructure improvements, support and inspection facilities, and train storage. Amtrak secured a federally-backed loan in 2016 for the program, with \$1.5 billion for the new fleet of 28 trainsets and \$1 billion for upgrades to the railroad infrastructure in the Northeast Corridor that would be necessary for the new service. Planning was begun for fleet integration, as the trainsets on order would operate side-by-side with the existing fleet of 20 Acela trains, which date to 2000 and have a 25-year service life expectancy, with some overlap as the new cars enter service and the first-generation trains are phased out. Station upgrades have been identified and programmed for Washington Union Station, New Carrollton, Baltimore and New York Penn Station (with the Moynihan Train Hall in New York opening in early January), and track renewal between New Carrollton and Baltimore. Other measures needed for the higher-speed trains would include improved right-of-way fencing, collision avoidance/positive train control, and a new heavy maintenance facility at the Penn Coach Yard adjacent to 30th Street Station.

The new fleet will need modernized service facilities to support its operation and reliability. The existing facility at Ivy City Yard, near Washington Union Station, would be expanded with new space for this, and this would have improved accessibility to rooftop equipment on the cars and car access with floor-height platforms. Mr. Gray showed photos of the new work platforms and equipment. With the new fleet consisting of trainsets with two locomotives, eight coaches and one café car, at a total length of 700 feet, longer than the Acela consists, the maintenance tracks and building had to be lengthened to accommodate them. (The new fleet has 386 seats compared to 304 on an Acela train.) Roof access was critical as HVAC units and other items are on the car roofs and shrouded by a bolted-on cover that must be removed to gain access to these components. At the platform-level access, the door locations are different between the old and new cars, thus railings and openings need to be relocated accordingly. Drop-table body stands have been provided to allow wheel sets/trucks to be removed from the cars as needed for maintenance, change-out and wheel truing. Sand storage and a delivery system have been provided to supply sand that the trainsets need for traction and braking capability on slippery rails. Four new outdoor train storage tracks are being provided as well within the yard.

Mr. Gray reviewed planned work at Sunnyside Yard in Queens, not far from New York Penn Station, in the middle of a very complex storage yard for both Amtrak and NJ Transit trains as well as a complex junction with the MTA Long Island Railroad (and about to become even more complicated and busy with the coming addition of the Long Island’s East Side Access tracks, which join the main line at this point). Space has been able to be carved out within the tightly-packed yard for the necessary length of service platforms for the new fleet and future needs are being included in the site planning.

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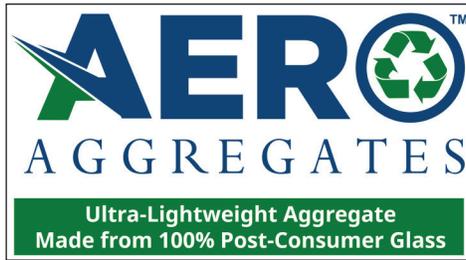
OUR "REIGLE" LEADER IN A YEAR OF SEVERAL FIRSTS — OUR 2020-21 SECTION PRESIDENT

Some things happen according to the calendar, and for reasons we often do not know or fully comprehend. Right about this time of year (late March as this is written) the swallows return to San Juan Capistrano, CA, and the buzzards arrive at Hinckley, OH – no one but those birds knows why and the birds are staying “mum” on it (except for tweets, and not the kind we can read or understand). Similarly, the April edition of *THE NEWS* will be bound to contain the year-end assessment of our sitting President. We are not sure how this started, or for that matter why it started, but tradition dictates that we present our annual assessment of said sitting President, whether any of us wants this to happen. This has been known to take a dark turn and become a bit of a “roast”, not intentionally, but self-driven somehow, and contributing to this is how much we can report (or have been given information by others, flattering or otherwise). And, as you know, we don’t mess with this tradition, since it apparently started before your Editor was around, editing or otherwise, and all the previous occupants of the “top spot” have had to endure it (including your Editor), so here we go.

If you recall the Editor before the current occupant of that desk, our esteemed predecessor, Sidney Robin, you are likely aware that (1) he enjoyed taking these “jabs” at the Presidents over the years (your current Editor takes no such pleasure in doing this, and we’re sure you believe this...) and (2) he was able to utilize his extensive vocabulary skills, to the point at which one might wonder if he was being complimentary or taking shots (when in fact he was doing both). At the time, this was done in the combined April-May edition that closed out the season, thus it was very much the “last word” on things. At least now we do this with one more edition of *THE NEWS* left, so the President gets a chance to rebut as needed. Your Editor’s promise is this piece will be written so as not to make you run to the dictionary or google any unfamiliar words, but you know promises are made to be broken, and you know your Editor...

It is little surprise that our 2020-21 Section President, Jen Reigle, has done very well in her year of leadership of our Section. Jen’s “day job” that pays the bills is as a project manager with Pennoni at its headquarters in Center City, where she specializes in bridge and structural engineering and projects in the firm’s Transportation Division. In her capacity as our Section’s point person, what has been unusual and therefore that much more impressive, is how she has managed to do this during “lockdown”. If you were one of the literal handful of folks who attended our last Section dinner before this all happened on March 12, 2020, you may recall how confusion reigned supreme and the many unknowns about the then-new virus and its effects were becoming better

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MARCH MEETING

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The improvement program must take a number of factors into account. Mr. Gray outlined the various labor clearances and service outages that must be obtained, scheduled and coordinated internally within Amtrak. Operational challenges are always in the mix with live tracks and active facilities on which normal service must be maintained. A number of supply and workforce issues have arisen with virus-related restrictions and work rule changes.

A number of insightful questions were submitted by the participants and ably answered by Mr. Gray. President Reigle thanked Mr. Gray for a great presentation and ended the meeting, sending the attendees “home.”

“REIGLE” LEADER

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known. In this confusion many who would have filled the room at Maggiano’s decided to skip the meeting, leaving then-President Kazi Hassan and his successor Jen to fend with the smaller crowd and getting a meeting off the ground, while, mentally, many of us in the room were at least partially somewhere else. They did, but unfortunately that would be the “last train leaving the station” as far as in-person dinner meetings would go, and both Kazi and Jen were left with the unenviable task of handling the remaining meeting program (the April breakout sessions and the Spring Social). Given what was reported in the following days, that the shutdown would be over in a matter of weeks, this didn’t at first seem all that difficult, but, as we know, the weeks turned into a year’s worth plus. Needless to say, the April meeting and Spring Social were not able to be conducted as planned, and Jen was sworn in as the Section President without the usual fanfare and with a big item to address almost right away in her term.

Being a good Engineer, and therefore very able to look at and evaluate options, Jen took on the task immediately and began to elicit ideas and proposals from the Board on how the Section would plan and put on a meaningful meeting program. The difficulty was compounded by the “moving target” of when things would return to whatever would constitute “normal”, and that remained elusive as the virus numbers and impact continued to grow. The cancelled Spring Social was able to be revived as a virtual event and finally nailed down in late September, when the “Spring” part of the title was more appropriately “Fall”, but it was able to be pulled off, and it was an event to remember. Similarly, a group of volunteers who knew their ways around Zoom was strung together to cobble a meeting program given successful trials with a special meeting on the Schuylkill River Swing Bridge in mid-May and a rescheduling of the “breakout” topics meeting from April to late August. In each case, good participation was realized and a successful method of delivery of both Section and Technical Group meetings was landed upon. Problem solved...

Jen was able to keep leading the charge for meetings in following months. As we all know, she had a lot of help with her dedicated “triumvirate” which includes President-Elect Briana Pampuch (whom complicated things a bit in the fall by getting married and changing her name...) and Vice President Mo Elghawy, along with the other officers, Board members and volunteers, so she had some help. The “noble experiment” (and apologies to William Penn) of virtual meetings turned out to be very successful and well received, and, as noted, attendance numbers have been quite good. But we’re still in lockdown, maybe at least for a little while longer... so Jen may have the “honor” (if it is that) to have presided over a season in which we had no in-person meetings but arguably, and ironically, one of our most successful meeting seasons. Thus, she may well be our first Section President to not be seen in person at our events, for the entire season – not a “first” one might want to tout or be proud of, but nonetheless a first.

If you take a look back at Jen’s monthly messages (and your Editor practically memorizes them as he must read them several times before each edition goes out – unfortunately he can’t remember anything these days, so they go away easily as well...), you have to admire the optimism and cheer she has conveyed with them despite the less-than-ideal circumstances we have had to experience (one might say “unprecedented” but one might be tired of this term by now...). They were consistently upbeat and positive, and not merely artificially or by design, but because the Section was getting things accomplished and putting on successful events despite the constraints of working from home and no networking. In her January message in particular, when we were all very happy to wave goodbye to the train wreck or dumpster fire (feel free to pick your analogy) that was 2020, and looking forward to better times, she was able to recite what might have been not by design or conscious thought a “top ten” list of accomplishments at that point, and her term was only half over by then. And on top of that she had a handy list of an additional five goals to complete through the remainder of her term. Again, this is very notable particularly in the environment in which it all came together, when the concept of “workday” is blurred and extended because of the many things that needed to be done each day with us not able to function as previously. With many of us becoming our kids’ new teachers (and allowing the kids to live their worst nightmares – not having to go to school but having mom/dad as their teacher), having to shop on-line or at odd hours for our necessities, having extended work days and endless virtual meetings, and keeping up with the latest information on the virus and related shutdowns/closures, life was getting complicated, and that time saved on commuting quickly was eaten up by other things. Fortunately our Section remained a “constant” with being able to provide what our members needed, and Jen was at the forefront.

Not to say Jen wasn’t affected herself by all of this. You may be aware that she is an avid Flyers

fan and season-ticket holder, and it’s nice to see she has decided to follow a “quality” hockey team particularly as she is not a born-and-bred Philadelphian. (Your Editor can proudly say he’s been on board since day one and was in the stands late in the first season, an early birthday gift, not long before the roof blew off the Spectrum and forced home games to be played in New York and Quebec to finish out the season.) Thus, it’s nice to see her enthusiasm for the orange and black, despite the up-and-down season the Flyboys have had this year, and especially despite not being able to attend most of the games in person with the restrictions in place until very recently. Hard to catch that errant puck watching on TV... We have also been advised that she is a baker. And a Penn State alum, which we won’t hold against her...

And then there’s axe throwing... Jen somehow became an avid participant in this activity, to the extent that she apparently was in a league for it. More than one of her counterparts, who has related that she had tended to be a little injury-prone over the years, remarked that maybe that wasn’t a good match with tossing a sharp object, particularly one where drinking is a big part of the competition and camaraderie. While your Editor will admit to being on a drinking team that has a bowling problem, there aren’t too many instances of being injured by an errantly-tossed bowling ball (he has seen a few lofted practically into ceilings, though...).

We usually like to reveal some “dirt” on the sitting President, but, like her two immediate predecessors, Kazi and Angelo Waters, we haven’t been able to find much on Jen. Even though we paid as close attention as we could (and you are aware that’s not our strong suit), we found little. Thus, we have shared what little we could find and that will have to suffice for this.

Thus, to give Jen a break and some credit for what she has done, as she prepares to pass the gavel and the responsibilities that come with it to Briana Pampuch, another first for the Section will happen. While we’ve had a few “boy-girl” alternating patterns of Section Presidents over the past few years, interrupted two years ago when Angelo passed the “baton” to Kazi, this will be the first time we will have had a woman succeeding a woman in the top spot. When this happens, we will be installing our tenth female Section President. So the score, such that it is, is currently a lopsided Guys 99, Girls 9, but things are slowly changing. (Those of you who participated in our Trivia Night in February know that the Guys total is actually 98, but we’ll keep that as our little secret...)

We do hope we have been able to give you a little insight on our outgoing President, and we thank Jen for all that she has done in a very much upside-down situation. We anticipate Briana will have the same level of great support from the Officers and Board and it will be easy for her to succeed with this backing, but we’ll still follow tradition next year and give her her due “report” as well. And hopefully we’ll be able to see Briana in person at a meeting...