

District 4 Design Newsletter

June 2011

From the Editor's Desk

By: Morteza Alian, P.E., Acting District Design Engineer

Raising the bar - This is the message we have been hearing from our senior management team in the past months. It is a strong message where we are challenged to raise the standard on what we do and how we do it. This message was repeated by the Secretary Prasad during his last visit to District 4.

I couldn't help but immediately think of the Olympic athletes. Raising the bar is an expression used to convey the idea of gradually setting the acceptable minimum standards higher, in order to reach an objective of excellence. If you are a sport junky like me, you must have watched athletes in high jumping and pole vaulting. Typically these athletes start their jumping exercises at a comfortable bar level at the beginning. This will allow them to become accustomed to the bar at low levels before venturing into higher levels. They raise the bar inches by inches, while testing their jumps and measuring their improvement. They always look to break the records, and always look for ways that are "bold and innovative" in order to get an edge in their field. After all, the purpose of such competitions is to excel and break records. There are times when these athletes break their own records in order to maintain superiority in their own field of competition. They never settle for mediocrity and, as a result, they raise the bar once they have reached it at that level. Their goal is to set a record and reach the highest level possible. But you know something, they never stop trying for reaching to the next level. This is the nature of reaching for excellence. It is arduous and requires commitment and positive attitude.

We have been challenged for over two years to produce more projects, in order to keep our construction industry afloat through these hard economic times. We have responded in a big way. We started this challenge in 2009 by producing 435 projects which was 10% over the statewide planned projects list, with construction costs of about \$2.4B. We continued this in 2010 with 622 projects which was 20% over the statewide planned projects list, with letting budget of \$2.3B. This year, we have let to contract 513 projects, which is 45% over the statewide planned projects list. The letting dollars is not published yet, but, as of May 2011, this figure is at \$1.4B with 445 projects. Obviously, we are not alone in this. The contractors bids were a major factor for the extra production. At the same time, the department was making a special effort to advance the production of major projects. Every time we received bids lower than our estimates, we asked our project managers to advance more projects. I have to say that most of the advanced projects at District 4 were let as design-build, which has provided jobs for our consulting industry as well.

To push for letting of nearly 1600 projects since Fiscal Year 2009 with over \$6B budget requires the cooperation and assistance of many people in many departments, which has resulted in overwhelming success of these projects through the production machine. This is how the government work is defined at a high level and we should take pride to be part of such an organization.

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From the Editor's Desk Continued

Each of us is tasked to raise the bar on our performance in our area of expertise. Each person knows best how to improve his/her performance. Each of our task has an impact on the overall work we produce for the department. Hence it is imperative for each of us to evaluate our work and determine the next level of excellence we undertake to reach. Obviously, examples I used above refer to work of Design so there are things we could do to improve the quality of plans in order to reduce supplemental agreements in design and construction. But I am sure there are activities other offices could do as well towards the same goal. We need to raise the bar in unison in order to have the most impact on our work. And I have all the confidence that we could do this. So let's get started.

What Makes Up A High Scoring Technical Proposal?

By: Morteza Alian, P.E., Acting District Design Engineer

As it is hard for me to find my words for this article, it is just as difficult for our consultants partners to figure out their best approach to a successful technical proposal. I remember some years ago, a consultant asked me "what would it take for me to get a simple 3R project from the department?". He was frustrated immensely because he had been short-listed five times previously and all those times, he either finished second or third.

Changes have occurred since then. First, we stopped repeatedly short-listing the unsuccessful firms that submitted unsuccessful technical proposals because this was taking opportunities away from other qualified firms and second, we reduced the number of pages on the technical proposals from 25 to 15 pages to reduce the costs. We have been constantly monitoring our reviews of these proposals over the years and now, the number of pages for most projects has been further reduced to eight (8) and the proposals are submitted electronically in acrobat format via email. All in all, our intent has been to reduce the production cost of these technical proposals for our consultants.

We have also been tinkering with the evaluation criteria for the technical proposal. Our latest evaluation criteria consists of four (4) major categories and eleven (11) sub-categories. The four major areas are: Scope of Services, Awareness of Project Issues, Project Management, and Project Staffing. You could find this information on our intranet site.

Our project managers provide a detailed scope of work at the advertisement and later at the scoping meeting. Nearly all information available on the project is given to all short-listed firms. How this information is used in the proposals will determine the points allocation. However, we have noticed that not all firms take advantage of all information provided.

I would advise our consultants to read the definition for each sub-category to understand the particular needs for the project at hand. One of the sub-categories that most firms have trouble with, is "the approach to project process". What we want is for the consultant to identify the key process(es) that will determine the success of the project and to describe how they will approach and monitor these processes. This is where the uniqueness of a process is highlighted for that specific project. The project could be going through a municipality with multiple requests/needs so in this case, the process would be to get concurrence and buy-in from the local government early and keep all parties (the department and the locals) aware of any changes at all times. You may also need to assess the risk associated with this work in the project management section.

What Makes Up A High Scoring Technical Proposal? Continued

Other areas where consultants could make a difference are: Control of Project Budget and Control of Project Schedule. Here is a simple fact. Consultants often claim to be able to complete the project six to twelve months early but we have yet to see this in reality. In fact, I have a vivid recollection of one consultant making such a claim in the proposal and once awarded with the project, they failed miserably because they forgot a few little things such as coordination with their subs and following the department processes. If you propose to bring the project in early then you need to highlight the activities with potential early completion and describe how this will be achieved. Regarding the Control of Project Budget, firms always look at how much the project is costing them. But have you ever looked at the difference between the final project costs (professional fees and construction cost) and the initial project costs? By the way, the final project costs include supplemental agreements during the design and construction phases. We would like to see the measures you have put in place to minimize such cost differences.

Understanding of Project Issues and Approach to Project Issues could be combined to reduce repetition of information as we have seen in some technical proposals. This is one area where consultants have tried to distinguish themselves from each other. However, some of the approaches to the project issues are seen as over-committed and aggressive because little explanation is offered. Such approaches require greater explanation to convey the intent and full understanding of the proposal.

When addressing Project Management the consultant should consider the project management style of the their Project Manager and how he/she incorporates the firm's management tools to manage a successful project. By he way, it is redundant to indicate that the project manager is the single point of contact. We expect this in a project manager.

Regarding Quality Control Process, the consultants need to show more than their typical checking and back-checking process. They need to demonstrate any new technique added to this process to enhance the quality of their plans production. Often we are given the process during plans production but quality continues through construction and lessons that have been learned should be reflected in this process.

One more thing. Firms do not need to core our roadway pavement in order to gain greater knowledge of pavement design at this stage. We have always tried to minimize the costs of these proposals to our consultants and as a result, we provide as much project information as possible to short-listed firms so they do not need to take extra measures and incur extra costs. What you need to do is to gain most of your knowledge through field visits and review of documents. This article focuses on technical proposals for final design contracts but the ideas could easily be applied to other contracts such as PD&E.

I hope you find this article helpful. We strive to work with our consulting partners best way possible. After all any cost savings realized by our consultants would eventually transferred to FDOT through lower overhead costs. So we hope this benefits both, consultants and FDOT.

Admin Support Tracking System

By: District Four Design Administrative Support Staff

In April 2011, we conducted our Annual Administrative Support Survey. Overall the results were great:

- Is the Design Admin support staff available for assistance?
 - 68.8% strongly satisfied and 3.1% strongly dissatisfied
- Do you get the services you request in a timely and efficient manner?
 - 71.9% strongly satisfied and 3.1% strongly dissatisfied

Admin Support Tracking System Continued

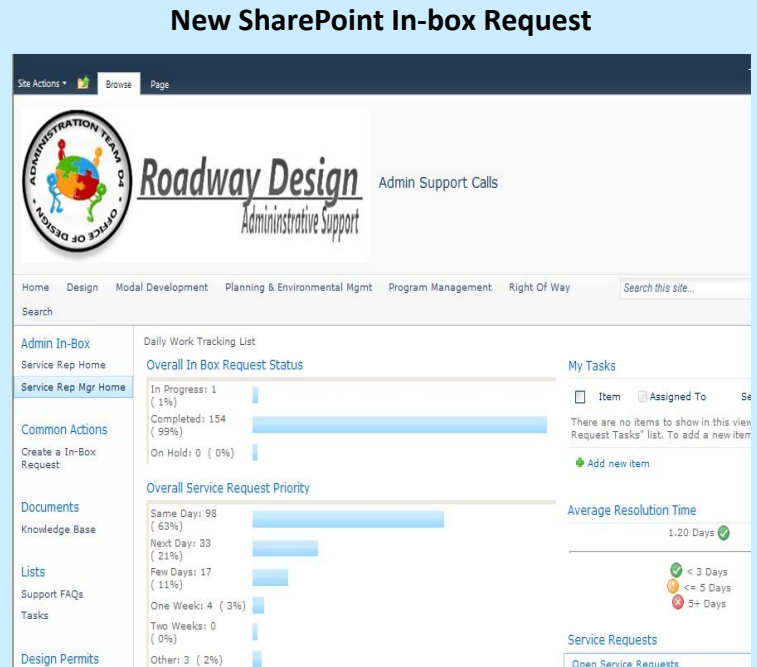
After a team review of these results, the Design Administrative staff met with each section to clarify and answer any additional questions or concerns. Our Administrative duties, responsibilities, working hours, etc. were revisited as well as our new directives for the next fiscal year.

As previously mentioned at these section meetings, the Design Administrative staff has been working with Derrick Johnson (CADD Support) to implement our database for processing work requests. We encourage everyone to visit our new in-box request via SharePoint.

This site:

- Allows Admin Support to complete and track request daily.
- Eliminates quarterly tabulations from excel spreadsheet.
- Is available for everyone to view.
 - o Not sure who is processing your request? This can be sorted by customer.
- Sends a message electronically to customers when a request is completed.

Additionally, we hope to have an electronic version of our current work-request form added to the SharePoint site in the near future. In the meantime, when submitting a request, please continue to either, complete a hard copy, send an email (**D4-DODesign Admin**), phone or stop by. As always, we look forward to providing excellent customer service while supporting the Department’s mission, vision and values.



Special thanks to Derrick Johnson and Danny Vargas.

District 4 Annual Awards 2011

2011 District Award Recipients



Fausto Gomez

Exceptional Project Manager Award

Fausto Gomez has been with the Department for twenty-one years and has over fifteen years experience in construction, maintenance, design, and project management. Fausto has exhibited an exceptional degree of excellence in his position as project manager due to his dedicated and dependable work effort, extensive operations experience, and his commitment to producing quality plans for the Department. He utilizes his experience from the other FDOT areas to complement his day-to-day project management work efforts. Fausto continually strives to build his technical foundation, including learning new approaches and also accomplishing personal development. He has clearly shown how valuable he is to the Design office, and also how important his contributions this past year have been the FDOT and District 4 as a whole.



Robert Bostian

Transportation Development – Division Employee of the Year

Rob is an example of a great and effective manager. He has been managing Section 5 of Design in consultant management unit for the past eleven years and he is the District Design-Build (DB) coordinator, a role that he accepted to take on since 2007. This year, Rob managed temporary consultant staff (a project manager and a designer) to produce plans for St Lucie county as part of an effort to utilize American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds allocation to local government. One may find it an amazing thing that Rob's section has not missed production since October 2008. As a DB coordinator, he has scheduled training sessions for the district employees on a regular basis in the last 12 months to bring up the members of Technical Review Committee (TRC) up to date with the rules and guidelines to follow when reviewing DB packages. He has been gracious, accommodating, focused, and dedicated to carry the department goals and objectives and for these reasons Rob has received this award.



Location

(Oreste Aribu, Michael Bradford, Michael Donovan, Steve Lehman, Greg McNeil, Roy Pearson, Nathan Powali, Jay Seeley)

**Bill Arata accepted the award on behalf of Location*

Safety Award – Moderate Exposure Work Unit

Compared all cost centers and determined that Location had zero vehicle incidents and zero injury and illnesses. Also took into account the cost centers exposure.

District 4 Annual Awards 2011

2011 State Award Recipients

**Ronald Wallace****Highway Engineering Award, honoring Al C Church**

Ron has made significant contributions to the Design/Consultant Management Group. He has a very proactive approach with drive and a “can-do” attitude needed to make positive things happen even in the most difficult of situations. Ron currently manages twenty (20) projects which include Seven (7) of the most complex the Department currently has in the work program. One of such projects is I-95 Widening (Yamato Road to Linton Blvd), a major Interstate widening project with multiple spin-off projects. Ron’s technical contribution has been the driving force behind the resolution of many complicated issues and challenges and he has been there to lead the way and provide the solutions to satisfy the project requirements.

**Henry Oaikhena****Sustained Superior Achievement – Non-Managerial**

Henry received this award for continuing performance at high level in the past five years. Henry has been responsible for projects exceeding 200 Million Dollars such as Eller Drive, Bridge Rehab CM@RISK, the only one in the state, and State Road 70 reconstruction project. Henry started with the Department some twenty-four years ago in the Trainee Program. He joined In-house Design soon after the program and then Consultant Management. Henry is a mentor to all young project managers. His low key approach to issues with clear direction is an example of his demeanor, clear communication, and conflict resolution.

District 4 Annual Awards 2011

2011 State Award Recipients



Jose Velarde

Role Model of the Year Award – Male, honoring Bill Gartner

Jose has been with the department for over 17 years and all in the Consultant Management. Jose came to the department with over 25 years of engineering work in the consulting industry. Jose is nominated for this award because of his tenacious work habit on a daily basis. He starts every day the same way by organizing his thoughts for the day; review action items, and begin addressing unresolved issues. For many years, Jose was the only project manager that managed bascule bridge rehab projects. He took it upon himself to further his knowledge on this type of projects by attending bascule bridge rehab seminars. Jose is known to his project managers as “daddy”, a father figure and father role model that provides knowledge to keep his staff aware of potential problems lay ahead. Jose has always held higher standards for himself and this has been evident throughout his career with the department.



Francis Lewis

Leader of the Year Award, honoring Ben G. Watts

Francis received this award because his leadership constantly contributes to the success of the department. All that Francis does instills the values of integrity, teamwork, excellence, and respect in the people around him. Francis cultivates an office culture where trust and openness are promoted to engage all team members. He sets an example for the Drainage Office by frequently sharing updates, by treasuring team member input, and by empowering individuals to make important project decisions on their own. Francis Lewis leads people to accomplish extraordinary things. We’re compelled by his exceptional leadership to eagerly nominate him for this award. We believe the success he generates speaks for itself and we’re more than pleased to be working under his direct, unsurpassed supervision.