

**Appropriations Committee  
February 25, 2015  
Department of Transportation Budget Public Hearing**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Daniel Stafko, I am a Supervising Engineer with the Department of Transportation in the District 3 Construction office located in New Haven, CT where I have been employed for almost 25 years. I am also a 29 year veteran of the Connecticut Air National Guard.

I would like to provide some insight to the Legislature on the Department's use of Consultant Engineering services. While many of the engineering consultants are needed for specific expertise on some of the larger or most complex projects, I have found that over the long term, State employees are almost always more cost effective. This is especially true when a project gets delayed due to utility work or design changes. In some cases a two year project becomes a four year project. Some have noted that a consultant is like a short term employee, but many of these consultants have worked on DOT projects for over 20 continuous years and their benefits and retirement becomes largely funded by the Department anyways.

I have read a few Department reports over many years that demonstrate savings that could be achieved if more work were done in-house and I agree with their conclusions. I believe the everyday work of the Department should not be done by consultants, but rather be spent developing our in-house staff to meet our future needs. I would compare it to a parent passing on their knowledge and skills to their children. Every time we use a consultant for a project we are forfeiting an opportunity to develop our technical expertise and losing institutional knowledge. For a number of years in the late 1990's there was a push to outsource a large portion of our work and a number of hiring freezes that stunted the development of future engineers to carry the torch if you will. This has caused the current dependence on outside consultant services. If we fail to properly plan going forward we will ensure future dependence on outside sources for talent to address our ever increasing complex rail, busway, and highway infrastructure systems that we have so wisely invested into over the past three decades. If we have learned anything from the Mianus River bridge collapse back in the early 1980's it is that we can't just fix and then ignore those investments until the next problem emerges.

Lastly, there also needs to be some mechanism that requires a training component for State engineers to get valuable experience on large scale projects that they are not afforded the opportunity to undertake. Just recently I had a fuel facility tank replacement project that was deemed to be required for consultant inspection. It was not a large project, but unique and atypical from our normal road construction. The hired consultant was very good but, not uniquely qualified for the work. His company relied on sub consultants for electrical, plumbing and heating inspections. So perhaps in the future we could have more of a hybrid of state & sub consultant use. We did this

successfully on a recent bridge rehabilitation project that included painting work, which the Department rightfully prefers to avoid exposure to its workers along with all the NACE training requirements. In general, management typically tries to use the resources it has, but with all the attrition that has taken place in the past few years, it is an uphill battle that will not improve for a number of years due to the time required to groom new talent.

I hope this is constructive and useful information.

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