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Transportation professionals in real estate development today: An ever increasing need

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With today's demand for sustainable transportation policies to accompany new developments, successfully completing the approval process can be the toughest part of the project development. The agency approval frequently comes down to the ability of the transportation infrastructure to support the project demands. The transportation professional has become an integral part of the development team. Having an experienced, licensed and qualified transportation professional is a key in the success of your development. By retaining a Professional Traffic Operations Engineer (PTOE), you can make certain that your development team has the requisite transportation expert involved.

The PTOE certification is a national certification program started by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) for transportation professionals who are licensed by their respective state agency as professional engineers, but also have transportation engineering specific experience, training and certification by the Transportation Professional Certification Board Inc. (TPCB). The PTOE certification program was initiated in the 1990s to address the demand for professional engineers who are specialized in transportation engineering. Most states provide a general professional engineering licensure for civil engineers with minimum work experience and education requirements. The licenses don't necessarily specify the discipline. The PTOE certification indicates that the professional has the requisite skills and experience to be nationally recognized as an expert in traffic engineering.

Certification as a PTOE is a powerful demonstration of requisite knowledge, skill and ability in the specialized application of traffic operations engineering. This national certification is important for development projects because it certifies that your transportation engineer is most likely a member of ITE, has passed a rigorous examination process but, more importantly, maintains his/her education and licensure with continuing education.

Out of 17,000 ITE international members, there are approximately 1,900 PTOE professionals, with only 80 certified PTOEs in New England and just 7 in Connecticut. The PTOE certification is more broadly held in Massachusetts with 43 PTOEs, most of whom work in the Boston metropolitan area. The acceptance in Massachusetts of the PTOE certification has become critical, with several communities now requiring certified PTOEs to prepare transportation studies for development applications.

Retaining a professional transportation engineer with both a state professional engineering license AND a PTOE certification provides you with a certified transportation/traffic engineering expert for your project. This licensure and certification can prove to be very critical in contested applications where appeals can be filed by the opposition and expert testimony is crucial to the success of the upholding of the development approval. In the case of contested expert testimony, having a PTOE

solidifies the transportation expert testimony on the record.

Another aspect of the PTOE certification is the transportation engineer skill set and the ability to convey the message of the transportation studies to the approving agency and frequently, a skeptical public at a working meeting or public or informational hearing. Engineers are not known to be great communicators in the public realm, but in a public hearing, communication to the agency and the public, are absolutely critical to the project success as well as the reputation of the transportation professional. Having a PTOE involved in this part of the process can provide substantial credibility and expertise to the development team.

Furthermore, the ability to communicate your message to an audience can be further enhanced with superb graphics and the use of high power transportation simulation tools to present at public meetings. These graphics can prove to be the convincing argument needed to demonstrate the viability of a project and the mitigation improvements proposed. Using these graphics, two dimensional and three dimensional simulations can be run to show a development's traffic flow on a high resolution image to an audience that must be convinced of the project's transportation benefits to a community. These graphics should not be used in every public hearing presentation, but must be considered carefully in the overall development presentation by the transportation professional and the client.

When your project needs a transportation/traffic engineering expert, Tighe & Bond can assist with your needs with two PTOEs on staff in Connecticut.

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