

TRANSPORTATION SPOTLIGHT

**MICHAEL F.
REBICK, PE**

COMPANY:

TRC Engineers, Inc.

TITLE:

ITS Project Engineer

**TRAINING ORGANIZATION
OR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY:**

University of Memphis

CERTIFICATION/DEGREE:

M.S. in Civil Engineering
with emphasis in
Transportation (2009)

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Q: How did you select your certification program or college major?

A: My college undergraduate orientation at Arkansas State University was rather challenging. The incoming freshman class in 2000 was split into groups of 50 or so and put into a classroom where everyone was given a newspaper style course catalog (this was before online registration was widely used). A university staff member then said, "Ok everyone, the catalog lists all available courses and times offered by major...take 15 minutes and make your schedule." Not really knowing how to build a college course schedule and never having put serious thought into selecting a major, I remembered that my parents urged me to look into engineering; so I turned to the engineering section, looked at the classes and thought, these sound interesting. The rest is history.

Q: What was the biggest influence in your selection of career pathway?

A: My most profound influence were my parents, Mike and Mary Jane. They knew I excelled in Math and Science all throughout grade and high school, and convinced me that a career in engineering was sustainable because engineers would always be in demand. They were right, as parents usually are! Also, I owe credit to a professional mentor of mine, Mr. Donald Gedge, former FHWA ITS Specialist. During my employment at TDOT he consistently challenged me and pushed me toward being a better inspector, manager, engineer, and leader. Without his support and guidance in Traffic Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems, I would not have had the success I have had so far in my career.

Q: What attracted you to the transportation industry?

A: The fact that "transportation" plays a role in everyone's daily lives. People and goods are moving constantly throughout the day, whether it's a daily commute from home to work or a freight truck going from the east coast to the west coast. Bodies are always in motion, and as an industry professional I wanted to play a role in somehow making the path for motion less congested and much safer for people and the environment. Actually, the I-40 Mississippi River Bridge and all its stoic presence reminds me daily why I do what I do especially when I think about the volume of passengers that drive across the river every day. The I-40 MS River Bridge allows States and communities to connect, people to work and see their loved ones, and plays a vital role in our nation's economy. I love that I play a small role in the bridge's primary purpose.

Q: What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A: Being the person in charge and the one others look to for answers and solutions. When I enter a room to lead or participate in a meeting I am most often viewed as the decision maker and/or problem solver. This doesn't happen overnight though. It takes time, hard work, and dedication to the job to build that type of reputation. I also really enjoy opportunities to speak and educate others about transportation.

Q: How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

A: TRC impacts the Greater Memphis Area everyday by ensuring that the TDOT's SmartWay traveler information system is operating at peak performance levels. We provide guidance to TDOT's ITS staff for proper inspection of the contractor and make sure they are maintaining the overhead message boards (DMS) and the traffic monitoring cameras (CCTV) per the contract plans and specifications. From a Transportation Management Center (TMC), TDOT traffic operations staff utilize the cameras to verify incidents, accidents and congestion mostly, and display important traveler information on the DMS for the purpose of reducing traffic congestion. This is ultimately a positive environmental benefit, because the less traffic congestion there is, less fuel is wasted sitting idle and less harmful vehicle emissions are put into the air.



Q: What's the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your professional career?

A: Being involved in all phases of a project, from planning & conceptual design all the way through to construction & maintenance of said project. Most engineering professionals focus on one discipline or aspect of a project, such as, just the planning or design or construction. So far I have been fortunate to be involved in all phases of project development during various times of my career. For example, I was involved with the TDOT Region 4 Memphis SmartWay I-40 ITS Expansion project (from Canada Rd. to the Shelby/Fayette County line). When I drive that section of I-40 I recall how I was at a table in the TDOT TMC making design recommendations on overhead message sign and camera locations, and then a few years later I was back at the same table signing off on the contractor's system maintenance obligations.

Q: What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

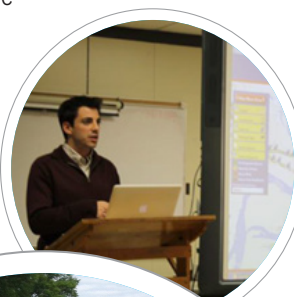
A: Knowing that I may face a new challenge. In my position, no two days are similar. One day I might be outside on a project trying to problem solve a real-life constructability issue, and another day I might be in the office writing a proposal or a plan to present to a customer to help them with their transportation needs. Although organization and time management are very important in engineering, the thought of problem solving excites me every day.

Q: If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college, what would it be?

A: I attended a college preparatory high school, so I felt pretty good about my first semester at college. My senior Calculus class in high school was nearly day-by-day exactly like freshman year Calculus in college. However, as a high school senior I had the option to take a Business or Physics class. I chose Business, but looking back, I wish I had taken Physics because it was an engineering basic requirement in my college undergrad program.

Q: What advice would you share with students or anyone considering your profession?

A: Students considering a profession in any field of engineering need to be prepared to work very hard on their education, especially in math and science fields. Dedication to education from K-12, especially high school, is the best tool to prepare yourself for college and eventually a career. However, engineering and even college is not for everyone, so the best advice I can give to someone wanting to be successful in any profession is find something you enjoy doing and then get really good at it. Passion and applied effort toward anything in life are keys for success and happiness.



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