

ITE History Relative to the MOVITE Section

Founders/Early Membership - For the most part, during the first few years of its existence, members of the Institute of Traffic Engineers came from the northeast. In fact, the five members of the original Board of Direction were all from the northeast. Also, except for Earl Reeder and Reyburn Hoffman no practicing traffic engineers from the Midwest were present at the founding. This was an accidental occurrence which chagrined the active traffic engineers from the Midwest, who were inadvertently left out. Because of the omission many Midwestern engineers informally boycotted ITE for a few years.

Harry Harrison, one of the early traffic engineers in Illinois, stayed out of the Institute for several years, as did Charles DeLeuw, who was in charge of the State of Illinois Highway Planning Survey. Also on the sidelines was Leslie Sorenson, The Traffic Engineer of Chicago. In due time, however, people such as Hawley Simpson and Burt Marsh convinced them that no insult was intended and they did agree to join. Later a Midwest section was formed when there were enough traffic engineers in Chicago who desired participation in the organization but who had little prospect of being sent to national meetings.

1950-51 - The Institute year of 1950-1951 was an unusual one as half way through the year Robert "Bob" Holmes took a year's leave of absence to serve the Federal Civil Defense Administration. Starting April 1, Professor Fred Hurd became part-time Executive Secretary spending 50 percent of his time as a professor at the Yale Bureau of Highway Traffic and 50 percent with the Institute. Five meetings of the Board were held during the year. The operating budget was slightly less than the prior year due to the part-time secretary relationship. The Constitution and Bylaws were changed to increase the number of living Honorary Members from five to ten and also to change the fiscal year to conform with the calendar year. Again there were more opportunities for employment in the traffic field than the Institute could supply. The new edition of the Traffic Engineering handbook was available during the year and 3,500 copies were sold by October.

A significant Technical Bulletin during the year, No. 3, "Traffic Actuated Traffic Signal Control", was approved and published. Almost 1,000 copies of the 1950 Proceedings were distributed and about 300 copies of back issues were sold during the year. Traffic Engineering Magazine now had 1,800 subscribers and the advertising was amounting to \$19,000 that year. Since only \$5,000 came in from membership subscriptions, it was obvious that advertising was carrying the load not only for the magazine but for the Institute. A chief goal during the year was to continually improve the magazine.

At the end of the year the membership total stood at 598. At that time membership was divided as 13 percent east coast, 15 percent southern, 17 percent middle west, 49 percent west coast and 6 percent foreign including Canada. Three Sections were formed during the year, the Canadian Section, the Missouri Valley Section consisting of Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma and the Indiana Section.

Technical Council – The Technical Council of the Institute dates officially from September 25, 1950 when the Board of Direction officially approved the formation of a “Technical Council” to make recommendations to them on technical affairs. In 1951 the Technical Council organization consisted of the following committees:

- 1 – Traffic Engineering Administration
- 2 – Traffic Engineering Curricula & Education
- 3 – Traffic Control & Operations
- 4 – Design of Equipment
- 5 – Planning & Geometric Design of Traffic & Pedestrian Ways
- 6 – Planning & Geometric Design of Terminal Facilities

Post-War Years – The decade and a half of the Institute’s life after World War II to the early 1960’s were truly the great growth years of the Institute. Sections were organized for the first time and that action contributed to year round activities on regional, local levels in addition to the national annual meeting. In fact by 1962 growth was so rapid that the number of members exceeded 1,500. The Section activities – technical meetings, community activities and social events provided a unity that was sorely needed at the grass roots of the Institute.

For the first three decades of the Institute’s life, the Institute membership consisted of those principally in government who were responsible for operating state and local traffic operational units. Some traffic engineers were also found with consultants and associations and organizations but government dominated.

Constitutional Convention – Changes in membership prompted suggestions for revision of the Constitution in 1971. However, as the changes were considered at the Board of Direction’s session during the 41st Annual Meeting, it became apparent that something more comprehensive was needed to bring the Institute up-to-date in its scope and purpose. The Constitutional Convention was the result. Nicknamed the Con Con, it consisted of marathon sessions for the 97 member-delegates. Committees were set up to deal with specific portions of the Constitution and by-laws. After five days and nights, the delegates’ work was complete, and their proposal was approved by the members. The new constitution was set up to provide better communication, more opportunity for members’ involvement in Institute affairs, and promote a better understanding of traffic engineering.

Name Change – In the early 1970’s several members proposed a name change for the Institute to incorporate the members who were not traffic engineers but who worked in transportation-related fields. It was thought that a more comprehensive name was needed, and many were suggested. Among them was the Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineers. This concerned some members employed at the Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering of the University of California at Berkeley, who felt the proposed name would be indistinguishable from that of the California institution. A consensus was finally reached, and the Institute of Transportation Engineers was chosen in 1975.

The final vote was 2,123 of 3,149 members in favor of the name change, only 55 more votes than were needed to pass the amendment to the Constitution.

The new name meant to reflect changes in perspective and membership that had already taken place, rather than a change in the basic direction and interests of the Institute.

ITE Honorary Members – During the first 50 years of the Institute 31 people have been singled out for “notable and outstanding” service. This recognition has been termed Honorary Member and it is one of the highest honors that one can achieve in transportation engineering. An ITE Honorary Member at that time had to be “a person who has performed notable and outstanding service in the interest of the profession of traffic engineering.” The Honorary Members of the Institute read like a “Who’s Who” in the transportation profession and in ITE rosters. Not all were or are ITE members. All were or are contributors to the profession.

Editorial Note: Of interest to MOVITE is the election of Rex M. Whitton, Federal Highway Administrator, and former Chief Engineer of the Missouri State Highway Department, in 1964 as the 17th Honorary Member, and Thomas J. Seburn of Kansas City, and Past President of ITE and first President of MOVITE, in 1975, as the 28th Honorary Member.

Source: Excerpts taken from “History of the Institute”, ITE Journal/August 1980