

## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT – PART 4 Getting Back on Track

This four-part series began with defining the role of government – protect the people it represents and serve their interests, needs, and desires – and the duties of PECG members in achieving those goals. Subsequent articles discussed numerous high profile infrastructure projects which encountered a variety of difficulties – delays, huge cost increases and overruns, failures, bankruptcies, and public liability.



What happened? Why have there been more high-profile failures and projects with really significant difficulties in recent years?

When PECG became more active at the federal level several years ago, goals and principles were established. These included pursuing increased funding for transportation and other infrastructure projects; conducting a cost comparison before outsourcing or using so-called “innovative” project delivery methods; requiring a public agency engineer to conduct on-site construction inspection on infrastructure projects; and utilizing competitive bidding for public agency contracts.



Boston’s “Big Dig” and other failures resulted from violation of some or all of these basic principles. Politicians at the Federal and State levels have been unwilling to increase transportation funding. To compound the problem, they issue overpriced contracts without competitive bidding to private entities or “consortia” who select the contractors,

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## THERE’S **GOLD** IN THAT MOU

The Unit 9 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), approved by the PECG membership and the Legislature last year, includes a 5% salary increase on July 1, an increase in vacation/annual leave cash out option, higher shift differentials and moving and relocation expenses, and other improvements. However, there are several additional economic items which are available to PECG members in Unit 9 – if, and only if, you ask for them!



A recent *Weekly Update* included a reminder that you are authorized up to 16 hours per fiscal year for professional leave, requested and used in the same manner as vacation and annual leave (MOU Section 5.15). Licensed employees can also be reimbursed up to \$100 per fiscal year for Professional Society and Organization Dues (MOU Section 3.3.b.) In both cases, you must apply for it before the end of the fiscal year (June 30) or lose it. (If you don’t currently receive the e-mailed *Weekly Update*, contact any PECG office and we’ll add you to the distribution list.)

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## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

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build their projects without on-site public inspection, frequently declare bankruptcy, and leave the public holding the bag when the “consortia” dissolve.

Those who are elected or appointed by the public often ignore or don't understand how the public feels. Public opinion polls commissioned by PEGC and others paint a very clear picture of what the public wants and expects.

86% believe that improving transportation infrastructure is urgent. 55% believe the state spends too little on transportation infrastructure, while only 9% think it spends too much.

80% support competitive bidding for construction and engineering services, defined as awarding a contract to a qualified firm at the lowest cost to the taxpayer. By a two-to-one margin, the public opposes awarding a contract if public agency engineers can perform the service at less cost. The same margin favors accomplishing a project at the lowest cost rather than getting it done more quickly.

Regarding inspection, a majority support on-site construction inspection by public engineers. Only 18% would allow construction contractors to inspect their own work.



Thus, the people the government is supposed to serve support increased spending to address the urgent need to improve transportation infrastructure; expect contracts to be competitively bid; want on-site construction inspection by public engineers; and oppose contracting out if it costs more than having public engineers do the work.

Nevertheless, the California State Budget authorizes contracting out engineering work at twice the cost of state engineers. Meanwhile, available funding declines. Huge construction contracts are now “innovatively” awarded without competitive bidding. On-site construction inspection by contractors, rather than public agency engineers, is increasingly the practice on many large projects.

Thus, the first steps in addressing California's transportation and other infrastructure needs (and rebuilding public confidence) would be for the political decision makers to return to the basic principles established when the Interstate Highway program began in the 1950's – cost effectiveness, competitive bidding, and public inspection – bite the bullet to provide adequate funding, and listen to the public they were elected to serve.

## THERE'S GOLD IN THAT MOU

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Last July, the shift differential doubled to 80¢/\$1.00, depending on the scheduled shift. On July 1, 2016, it will increase again to \$1.80/\$2.00 (Section 3.9).

Employees in some classes receive recruitment and retention pay differentials of \$200 to \$300 per month (Section 3.19). License exam fees and charges, as well as renewal fees, will be reimbursed. (Section 3.3.a.) Unit 9 employees may qualify for climbing pay (Section 3.15), diving pay (Section 3.10), bilingual differential pay (Section 3.4), a bonus for working at specified prisons (Section 3.8), and reimbursement of application, exam, and renewal fees for certain certificates (Sections 3.13 and 3.14).

DWR employees can receive a CTO bonus for achieving operational availability goals (Section 3.27). Field employees can be reimbursed \$100 every 18 months for purchasing safety footwear (Section 7.3). Employees can be reimbursed for 75% of public transit passes, up to a maximum of \$65 per month. The same is true for vanpool riders; vanpool drivers can receive \$100 per month (Section 7.2).



There are a variety of other economic benefits which apply to employees in particular circumstances, but if and only if you apply for them. The PEGC MOU is online at the PEGC website at ([www.pegc.org](http://www.pegc.org)). If you want a printed bound copy, contact the Sacramento PEGC office and we'll mail it to you.

# NOMINEES FOR PECG CORPORATE OFFICE

The candidates for PECG Corporate Office for 2016-17 are listed below. Ballots will be mailed to all PECG members on July 11. The successful candidates will be installed at the Annual Board Meeting in September. The nominees, with their classifications and PECG Section, are:

## PRESIDENT ELECT

- ★ **Sutida Bergquist** - Sr. Sanitary Engineer, Water Resources Control Board, Los Angeles Section
- ★ **Cameron Knudson** - Transportation Engineer/Civil, Caltrans, Marysville Section

## VICE PRESIDENT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

- ★ **Ryan Atencio** - Air Resources Engineer, Air Resources Board, Los Angeles Section
- ★ **Matt Hanson** - Transportation Engineer/Civil, Caltrans, Capitol Section

## VICE PRESIDENT SUPERVISORY

- ★ **Refugio Dominguez** - Sr. Transportation Engineer, Caltrans, Los Angeles Section
- ★ **Steve Lee** - Sr. Transportation Engineer, Caltrans, Sacramento Section

## VICE PRESIDENT AT LARGE

- ★ **Ambreen Afshan** - Air Pollution Specialist, Air Resources Board, Fort Sutter Section
- ★ **Kristi Shelton** - Water Resource Control Engineer, Water Resources Control Board, River City Section

## SECRETARY

- ★ **Jane Pham** - Transportation Engineer/Civil, Caltrans, Inland Empire Section
- ★ **John Vassiliades** - Sr. Transportation Engineer, Caltrans, Los Angeles Section

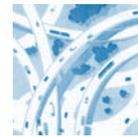
## TREASURER

- ★ **Ferdinand de la Cruz** - Sr. Transportation Electrical Engineer/Specialist, Caltrans, Inland Empire Section
- ★ **Keith Mack** - Sr. Transportation Engineer, Caltrans, Marysville Section

The current President, **Mark Sheahan**, a Senior Transportation Surveyor in Sacramento, will become Past President and **Robert Lumahan**, a Transportation Engineer in San Diego, will become President.



## Annual NASHTU Conference



PECG is a cofounder of the National Association of State Highway and Transportation Unions (NASHTU) which now includes 38 affiliate organizations in 20 states. NASHTU works at the federal and state levels to seek additional funding for transportation and oppose wasteful outsourcing. NASHTU's Annual Conference was held in Washington, D.C. in April.



California Congresswomen **Grace Napolitano** and **Judy Chu** and Congressman **Alan Lowenthal** (far right) join PECG leaders at NASHTU's Legislative Reception at the U.S. Capitol.



Congresswoman **Susan Davis** met with PECG Past President **Roy Flores** and President Elect **Robert Lumahan** during NASHTU's 17th Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.



## Lowell Allen Bridge Dedication

The life and work of former Caltrans engineer and long-time PECG member **Lowell C. Allen** was celebrated this past April in Mendocino County with the naming of a bridge in his honor.

With family, friends and local dignitaries in attendance, Caltrans dedicated the **Lowell C. Allen Memorial Bridge** along Highway 101 over the South Fork of the Eel River.

Allen spent 39 years in public service at the California Department of Transportation, including working as a Senior Bridge Engineer in District 1 construction from 1973 to 1990.

State Senator Mike McGuire presided over the dedication ceremony. He authored Senate Concurrent Resolution 73 to name the bridge after Allen.

Allen's wife, Esther, was also on hand along with many family members and friends (pictured). Esther Allen was honored with a framed copy of the Senate Resolution and her own Lowell C. Allen Memorial Bridge sign.

