

# Q&A with Terry Nelson, Executive Secretary-Treasurer Carpenters' District Council of Greater St. Louis and Vicinity

## IBJ: What's the state of construction in the St. Louis area?



Nelson

Nelson: Our two biggest jobs are both in Illinois - the Lively Grove power house and the ConocoPhillips expansion. We have more than 200 carpenters working on the Conoco job

right now. Other than that, it's the worst I've ever seen it - the worst since the Great Depression. People talk about 1974 or 1982. I was around for both of those recessions, and they weren't anything compared with this.

## IBJ: Is there any good news on the horizon?

Nelson: Yeah, Missouri is beginning a big program to repair bridges around the state. The new Mississippi River Bridge Project is going to be bid soon. And there will be a lot of projects coming along from Illinois' capital development program.

## IBJ: How big is the Missouri bridge program?

Nelson: It's 540 bridges across the state and right at \$600 million. It's beginning in

October and they'll be repairing bridges from border to border and all four corners.

## IBJ: What's the status of the new Mississippi River Bridge Project?

Nelson: They backed up the bid date 30 days because of the minority participation and the female participation. That's a little bit of a bog, but I still don't see that going anywhere but forward - and it's going to go like the proverbial snowball. Once it starts going downhill, it's going to pick up momentum very rapidly because it's all time sensitive.

## IBJ: How is the Kiel Opera House project progressing?

Nelson: As I speak today, they're still \$3.5 million short. I'm putting all my feelers out, trying to figure out something to help them fill that gap. If the banks would do what they would normally do, that deal would be done already - but they're not doing what they normally do.

## IBJ: Is the Carpenters' union putting money into it?

Nelson: I don't have an opportune place to take \$3.5 million right now. In the old days, I would have that much money in my market recovery fund. This is money that you put in and get back within 12 to 18 months. This is no big deal, but I don't have the money there now. I have to get the people who are managing my portfolio

of investments for my pension pool to look at it, and that doesn't happen over night.

## IBJ: Paul McKee has proposed a huge redevelopment project in North St. Louis. Do you see anything coming of that in the next couple of years?

Nelson: I think it's going to get better. There's a big meeting coming up and we have about 50 people who are going to be there wearing tee shirts that say "City Jobs = North Side Development." What's good is that right now, there's no opposition from any of the city politicians. A major development was that they worked out an eminent domain deal. For some reason, eminent domain brings out the worst in everybody.

## IBJ: How can you do it without eminent domain?

Nelson: It's going to be controlled. You have to appease the people who have the roadblocks up. You set up an approval process. But this project all depends on the tax increment financing. We have a wasteland up there; and if we don't do something about it, it's going to just grow.

## IBJ: Have you been following the proposed STAR bond development in Glen Carbon?

Nelson: That's taken a little nick along

the way. All of these projects take a little nick along the way. Nobody goes to the game and wins all the hands. You have to get beat up a little bit. Then you have to readjust. That's a hard thing that a lot of people aren't very good at. They have a good plan going; they know it's a good plan and they get enough opposition that forces them to readjust. Some people just can't readjust. They'll fight it to the end and when the end comes, they don't get what they want.

## IBJ: When do you think the economy is going to rebound?

Nelson: I don't want to say this because it's too early to say it, but I think we may have hit bottom and we might start rising a little bit. I don't think we're going to skyrocket off, but it's going to be a nickel at a time. Right now, it's a challenge out there. I think young people today will be better for what they're going through now. They're going to be more appreciative of what they have when they get an opportunity to get it back.

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# Clear communication, experienced suppliers and subs signs of a truly green construction process

By KERRY L. SMITH

As a prospective client shopping for a design firm and general contractor, how can you choose an experienced "green" team to build your next facility - versus one that's still "green" around the edges when it comes to LEED experience?

Architects and general contractors across Southwestern Illinois agree that it takes more than a few LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified professionals to distinguish a seasoned green construction firm from one that has cut its teeth on only a few ecologically friendly projects.

Dennis Young, president and CEO of Wm. B. Ittner Inc., says the success of a green commercial construction project often rests on clear communication between the owner, the architect and the builder from day one.

"We look at the project as a three-legged stool," said Young. "Owner, architect and builder. Two of those legs - owner and architect - are in place for quite some time, before the project ever reaches the construction phase. From the day the owner first communicates his objectives for a 'green' facility, we've all got to be committed to every avenue of the LEED process that ultimately brings us to where we need to be. You can hear the green marketing hype, but when you're in the trenches making the project happen, you can tell pretty quickly which firms are green and which are not."

Architects and general contractors generally present the owner or client with a detailed project checklist up front - long before any plans are drawn - that assigns points to various green project components, allowing designers and builders to work with the client on deciding how green his building will be. The checklist, says Young, also enables an owner to see the costs of achieving increased levels of green certification on the structure itself. Examples of LEED project checklist categories include a sustainable work site, water efficiency, energy efficiency, use of recyclable materials, indoor environmental quality and more.

"Some clients are committed to a holistic view of sustainability in terms of design," Young said, "while others are looking to include what we refer to as a demonstration project at their facility, such as a wind turbine. If a project has gone through a planning process, that process has given the owner some time to think about his goals, objectives and priorities - to cost out some options and

arrive at a scope of the project and budget. If you don't go through such a process, you may not have sufficient time to talk through the green components and to engage the decision makers. Everybody has to be playing by the same playbook and scorecard when it comes to green, because at the end of the day it is what the client wants and has paid for," he added.

Making sure the subcontractors and suppliers for the project are also experienced with green construction is crucial, according to Young. "We talk with the people in the field who are actually going to do the work, and we present them with case studies to see what their approach might be," he said. "One example might be warranty items for green products and the issue of installation of those products at a time of year when it might not be wise to put them in. It's got to be a team approach, and suppliers are also a vital part of that team."

Bruce Holland, president of Holland Construction Services Inc., says 15 members of his staff now have LEED accreditation. Ryan Savage was the company's first professional to learn LEED.

"Whether you have your building green-

certified or not, anybody who's in the industry is going to belong to the U.S. Green Building Council," Holland said. "That's a given. Secondly, an owner should ask how many of the construction company's employees are LEED APs (accredited professionals)."

In many cases, Savage says, the very design of the facility lends itself to LEED certification at no or little additional cost.

"We're working on a project right now where part of the design includes high efficiency HVAC equipment," Savage said. "We found that we could get that building LEED certified at no additional expense. In another case, it could cost the owner 5 or 10 percent more depending upon the level of certification."

Even in this recessionary economy, Holland is seeing owners remaining committed to their green goals because they're taking a longer-term view of the benefits of a green workplace. "Usually you look at a rate of return or life cycle of five to 10 years," he said, "but some of our clients want to look out 10 to 15 years. What we've found is that if you've got twin office buildings side by side where one is green and the other is not, most tenants will want to go to the

LEED-certified building - even if the rent is higher. The healthy environment often translates into increased productivity and lower turnover," he added.

Keith Poettker, vice president of business development for Poettker Construction Co., says waste management can be a key component in any green construction effort. "Having a plan for recycling a good percentage of the waste - rather than trucking it off to a landfill - is often a big part of the green construction process," Poettker said. "If you have a plan established that dictates the sorting of different waste materials, that goes a long way toward LEED points."

Poettker says Wal-Mart - one of the company's larger clients - hired its own full-time green professional 10 years ago; the executive's sole function is to ensure that the retail giant builds its Supercenters to operate as energy efficient as possible. "One example is the skylights in these stores," he said. "The skylights lowered Wal-Mart's lighting costs substantially. During a sunny day, most of their lights aren't even running. They're an excellent example of a client who is willing to invest in the returns that green construction produces."

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American Equipment and Machine Inc. will manufacture state-of-the-art mining equipment for Murray Energy and its independent operation subsidiaries across the United States at this plant. More than 100 new full-time positions have already been established at the facility, with the potential of up to 100 more.

#### Klene joins Taylor Roofing

Taylor Roofing welcomes Rick Klene as executive vice president.



# Program offers bridge contractors chance to propose design alternatives, save project money

By KERRY L. SMITH

Prequalified contractors bidding for jobs tied to the new Mississippi River Bridge are participating in a federal program that is a pilot study for the rest of the nation's DOTs.

In conjunction with design and construction of the new bridge, the Missouri Dept. of Transportation is administering the Federal Highway Administration program known as Alternative Technical Concepts - an initiative that encourages the "final four" list of prequalified bridge contractors to include alternative proposals of methods that could reduce the cost of construction.

Greg Horn, Mississippi River Bridge project director, says the FHWA's program is innovative and unique; it encourages prequalified contractors to confidentially propose their brightest and best cost-saving ideas using the latest advances in construction technology.

"It's a great tool to have in our toolbox," said Horn. "It's similar to value engineering. With ATC, we're able to approve a bridge contractor's design ahead of time, so they - and no one else - can bid specifically on their alternative concept. Normally on a design-bid-build, a contractor has to bid the job as he sees it. With ATC, we're approving each prequalified contractor's design in a confidential meeting with that firm. It presents an opportunity for these contractors to offer different means and methods that could save the project money - either through different equipment, a change in materials, reduced labor costs or something else,"

**"Once the bridge contractors were prequalified, they were given progress prints and were able to come up with an alternative design. ATC really gives MoDOT value engineering up front, and it also gives the contractors incentives to get that job."**

**Joe Hamilton**  
*Senior Structural Engineer  
Kadkaskia Engineering Group  
Belleville*

he added. "And if they're not ultimately selected, their proprietary information remains just that - and they can modify it for use in a future project bid."

On a mega project such as the new Mississippi River Bridge - a \$640 million project including the four-lane, cable-stayed structure, the interchanges and the Illinois and Missouri approaches - the opportunity for alternative construction concepts to save money assuredly exists, according to Horn.

"We will evaluate each of the four contractor teams' ATC proposals and if we find that a particular alternative is feasible, we will agree to split the savings with that contractor," he said. "The final four contractor teams basically have the chance to come to us after the project is awarded and say, for

example, 'I have a plan...by making this change, we could save you \$2 million.'"

If a contractor's ATC is okayed, the new bridge's design team - which includes representatives from MoDOT, IDOT and the FHWA - will sit down with that firm and design it as an addendum to the contractor's specific plans, Horn says.

Joe Hamilton, senior structural engineer with Kadkaskia Engineering Group in Belleville, agrees that ATC is a win-win for the DOTs and the private-sector contractors with whom they work.

"Once the bridge contractors were prequalified, they were given progress prints and were able to come up with an alternative design," Hamilton said. "ATC really gives MoDOT value engineering up front, and it also gives

the contractors incentives to get that job."

According to FHWA spokeswoman Nancy Singer, MoDOT's use of the ATC process is a hybrid approach that includes a combination of traditional design-bid-build and innovative design-build concepts.

In late August, the Mississippi River Bridge design team selected the four finalists to bid on the cable-stayed portion of the new bridge. They are: 1) Kiewit Western Co., 2) a joint venture between American Bridge Co. and Dragados USA, 3) a joint venture between Walsh Construction and PCL, and 4) a joint venture between Massman Construction Co., Traylor Brothers and Alberici Enterprises.

The design team plans to open the bids in mid October for the main span of the bridge.

Horn says eight additional contractors, according to MoDOT, have indicated that they were interested in working with the bridge design team to develop potentially cheaper construction alternatives on the bridge approaches, the section of the roadway on either side of the bridge leading to the span itself. The section ranges from approximately Illinois Rte. 3 on the Illinois side to just before Broadway on the Missouri side. Interested contractors who are developing ATCs for these approaches, according to MoDOT, are: Fred Weber Inc., KCI Construction Co., Keeley and Sons, Keller Construction Inc., Kozeny-Wagner, Millstone-Bangert Inc., St. Louis Bridge Construction Co. and Walsh Construction.

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