



# The BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TRANSPORTER

A newsletter for MDOT-certified firms and program stakeholders

February 2015

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- DBE Spotlight: Great Lakes Engineering Group, LLC
- DBE Small Business Conference Reminder
- March MDOT Bid Letting Highlighted Projects

### DBE Spotlight: Great Lakes Engineering Group, LLC



This month, we had the pleasure of interviewing Amy Trahey. Her company, Great Lakes Engineering Group, has been in business since 2000 and has estimated gross revenues of about \$4 million with 18 employees. The following conversation shows how she has managed this success, while exploring some tips she may have for aspiring business owners.

**Describe your business (good and services your business provides):**

Great Lakes Engineering Group, LLC is a civil engineering consulting firm that specializes in transportation. The company is heavily focused on bridge engineering, specifically bridge design, bridge safety inspection, bridge load rating, bridge construction engineering, and underwater bridge inspection.

**What prompted you to start your own business?**

As the founding principal, I have always been fascinated with bridges. I started my career interning for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), which led to a permanent position in bridge design, emergency bridge repairs, bridge inspection, and bridge construction. After working for MDOT for six years, I was offered a promotion that would have taken me away from the hands-on experience of bridge engineering. It was at that moment that I realized to further my passion for bridges, I needed to make a change. That change was starting my own engineering firm that focused on my passion.

**What is your educational and career background?**

I am a proud graduate of J.W. Sexton High School in Lansing, where I participated in a work study program that allowed me to intern for the governor’s office. During high school, I also worked at the Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association. I received my Bachelor of Science in civil engineering from Michigan Technological University in 1994. During college, I interned for MDOT and was hired on full-time after graduating. I was a bridge engineer at MDOT for six years prior to starting Great Lakes Engineering Group, LLC in April 2000.

**MDOT MISSION STATEMENT:**  
*Providing the highest quality integrated transportation services for economic benefit and improved quality of life.*



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**How much research did you do before starting your business?**

I attended a small business startup seminar at Lansing Community College and vetted the potential complexities and mandatory requirements for prequalification with several DOTs, including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Wisconsin. I also met with several civil engineering business leaders to ask them what their biggest challenge was to running a business.

**What were the most helpful sources while starting your business?**

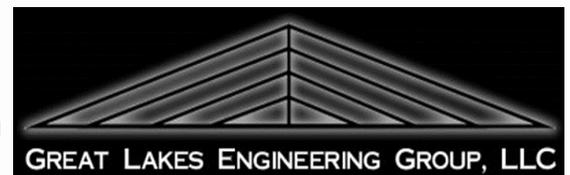
The American Council of Engineering Companies of Michigan (ACEC/M) was and continues to be a tremendous resource to our small firm. I was educated to be an engineer, not a business owner, and did not know the first thing about human resources, finance, business operations or marketing. ACEC/M provided all the tools and training to learn how to run a successful business. MDOT's Office of Business Development also was instrumental and continues to provide valuable training and networking opportunities. Lastly, a good, independent certified public accountant also was vital for a successful start.

**Was there ever a time when you were discouraged?**

Maintaining a positive attitude has helped tremendously over the past 15 years because the business of consulting is a complete rollercoaster ride. There have been several proposals and projects we pursued that we were not selected, but it only made us motivated to try harder the next time. We feel very fortunate just to have the opportunity and realize that we will not get every job we pursue.

**What will make your business stand out from competitors?**

From the beginning, I have realized that a firm is only as good as their last project, meaning that no matter how large or small the project, you have to give 110 percent because you will be judged and evaluated on how well you performed, and it will impact all future work.



**Who is your target client/customer base?**

Our target clients are federal, state, local and private agencies that use a qualified-based selection (QBS) process.

**Do you find it challenging or difficult being a woman in a business with mostly men?**

While creating diversity amongst our profession has been slow, I appreciate the courtesy and respect I consistently receive from my peers. That respect has to be earned, but once it is, there are no labels. In addition, working amongst all men has its perks, like no long lines for the women's restroom.

**What was the advice you received that was most helpful to you, and would you share with us who gave you that advice?**

The best advice I ever received came from my mother, who recently passed away: "If you have confidence, a strong work ethic, determination, and appreciation for all people, you can pursue your dreams and yield great success." She also emphasized the importance of striking a work/life balance and honestly told me that I will never strike the perfect balance. It is in the pursuit of trying that will keep me and my family happy and sane.

**Direct questions to: 866-DBE-1264(Lansing)**



## DBE Conference: March 22-24

If you have not registered for the 35th Annual DBE Small Business Conference, please be sure to do so as soon as possible as registration closes in a few short weeks! There is no cost to attend this event and we still have space left for the vendor fair, as well as openings for sponsors.

For registration and more information about the event, please visit <http://2015dbconference.eventbrite.com>, or contact us at [mdot-dbe@michigan.gov](mailto:mdot-dbe@michigan.gov) or 866-323-1264. This will be a conference you will not want to miss. We look forward to seeing you there!

### Friday, March 6, MDOT Letting:

#### Just a few of the projects scheduled for this bid letting:

- 39111-120237 - Kalamazoo County - 5%
- 49025-113189 - Mackinac County - 3%
- 82081-116524 - Wayne County - 7%
- 41481-124556 - Kent County - 6%
- 21024-118804 - Delta County - 2%
- 63132-123947 - Oakland County - 7%
- 34445-123243 - Ionia County - 5%
- 31041-118767 - Houghton County - 3%
- 79020-118521 - Tuscola County - 4%

#### Small Business Program Projects:

- 77475-126767 - St. Clair County
- 23155-124128 - Eaton County

### FTA Contracting

**Bus transit and planning agencies post bid opportunities at:**  
[www.michigan.gov/mucp](http://www.michigan.gov/mucp)

Notices are posted as needed, so check often!

**If you have any questions regarding the M-1 RAIL Project, contact:**

Sommer Woods  
Director of Community and Government Relations  
313-566-8250  
[sommer.woods@m1rail.org](mailto:sommer.woods@m1rail.org)  
[m-1rail.com](http://m-1rail.com)

To view all projects on the March letting schedule:

**DBE Website:** [www.michigan.gov/mdotdbe](http://www.michigan.gov/mdotdbe)

To find construction project work classification details, go to [www.michigan.gov/mdotdbe](http://www.michigan.gov/mdotdbe)

- **Select** Letting (from drop-down menu)
- **Select** Letting Date
- **Click** "Go"
- *To identify potential prime contractors, check the Eligible Bidders list before submitting a bid.*

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