

ACEC / NCDOT JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSTRUCTION & MATERIALS

April 19, 2023
Meeting Minutes

The meeting was held on January 25, 2023, at 1:30 PM; In attendance were:

NAME	REPRESENTING	EMAIL ADDRESS
Max Buchanan	STV	Max.buchanan@stvinc.com
Phillip Johnson	KCI	phillip.johnson@kci.com
Christine Goins	S&ME	cgoins@smeinc.com
Frank Gioscio (Virtual)	ATCS	fgioscio@atcsplc.com
Kevin O'Dell	Summit	kevin.odell@summitde.net
Jack Cowsert	ECS Limited	jcowsert@ecslimited.com
Jason Salisbury	NCDOT - Division 6	jsalisbury@ncdot.gov
Brian Hunter	NCDOT – Materials and Tests Unit	bhunter@ncdot.gov
Jim Sawyer	NCDOT – Field Services	jsawyer@ncdot.gov
Maira Ibarra	NCDOT – Construction Unit	mibarra@ncdot.gov
Michelle Gaddy (Virtual)	NCDOT – Construction Unit	mhgaddy@ncdot.gov
Wiley Jones	NCDOT – Construction Unit	wwjones1@ncdot.gov
Brian Skeens	NCDOT – Construction Unit	bcskeens@ncdot.gov
Tom Payne (Virtual)	NCDOT – Professional Services	tpayne@ncdot.gov
Robert Stroup (Virtual)	NCDOT – Professional Services	rstroup@ncdot.gov
Todd Whittington	NCDOT – Materials and Tests Unit	twittington@ncdot.gov
Matt Hilderbran	NCDOT – Materials and Tests Unit	mrhilderbran@ncdot.gov

[ACEC Subcommittee Business](#)

Minutes from the January 26, 2023 meeting were approved.

[Training](#)

[M&T Training Updates](#)

- 236 training/retest classes are currently scheduled for 2023 and 90 classes have been held with a potential of adding classes in the future.
- A Chemical Stabilization subgrade/base field class has been provided with another class scheduled for May 4th in Raleigh.
- Currently recruiting a Geo-Materials field specialist supervisor and plan to fill 3 vacancies out of 5 positions in that group. A CEI person is currently in training to assist the group as a technical trainer.

- The M&T group brought up some recent ethical/fraud issues within the M&T CEI industry. They identified issues in lab testing and training classes, including students taking photos of exams. All agreed this was not acceptable. Each situation is being dealt with on a case-by-case basis, up to and including revocation of certifications. M&T shares notices of violation with neighboring states.
- M&T is developing an Aluminum Welding Certification program that is tentatively scheduled to be released in Fall 2023; necessary equipment is still being procured. It is not yet clear if CEI staff will be able to participate up-front, but it is M&T's long-term goal to offer to CEI.
- M&T holds 28 pavement preservation workshops per year. In 2022, over 600 NCDOT employees were trained. Going forward, M&T will open the trainings to NCDOT AREs, CMEs, etc. They may open it to CEI staff in the future, but they will evaluate need before deciding.
- There are plans to hold a "Count on Concrete" Conference in the Fall in the Charlotte area. This will focus on PCCP.

Discussion Items

NCDOT vs CEI Pay Rates

- Discussed NCDOT job postings that are advertising entry level rates of \$53,000/year; this is equivalent to a CEI technician with 6+ years of experience on the salary calculator. It was determined that the ad was not written clearly and although there are some cases where NCDOT needs to offer higher starting salaries to fill critical positions it is not the norm. It was the opinion of those present from NCDOT that these advertisements are misleading and create issues in the industry as well as within the Department.

Annual Technician Salary Review

- The Department utilizes the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for CEI salary review but realizes it is a lagging indicator. Last year, the Chief's Office allowed for a greater increase than the BLS showed. No projections for 2023 adjustment amounts were available. BLS data will be available to NCDOT in late June/early July, and NCDOT's findings will be reviewed internally shortly thereafter. The timeline for finalization of CEI rate adjustments will be influenced by legislative adjustments for NCDOT staff, with the intent being to provide optimal CEI adjustments.
- Notice of any annual adjustments will be made by an authorized NCDOT memorandum. The memo date will be the effective date and firms are eligible to adjust rates on the effective date or after. The Firm will need to request/notify the pay adjustment for each

technician through the Resident Engineer's office accordingly. The request should include the Tech's name, position, old rate, and new rate. The industry requested that the memo verbiage provide clear direction that rate adjustments are inherently approved, requiring *notification* to Residents rather than *request for approval from* Residents. NCDOT will consider this request and adjust memo accordingly.

Technician I vs Technician I Trainee Rates

- NCDOT has decided to hold the Technician I Trainee pay rate scale as-is until the Technician I starting rate is equal to the Technician I Trainee final rate. Based on the estimated increases, this should occur in two to three years.

Technician I Trainees on LAP Projects

- NCDOT will consider allowing Technician I Trainees on LAP projects if the project has Federal Funding and the municipality is willing to utilize a Trainee on their project. The firm will need to communicate with the municipality, Division, and Construction Unit. The PM and NCDOT representative will need to oversee and approve the trainee's progress and pay increases. It was noted that only technicians in reimbursed positions can be officially enrolled in the training program (therefore, firms providing staff without billing the project cannot officially be trainees).

Project-Specific Contracts

- The requirement (Rule of Thumb) that project-specific contracts need to be a minimum of 2 years in duration and require 8 positions was discussed. Per the PSMU, there are no procurement requirements that would prevent a Division from moving forward with a project that does not meet the 2/8 requirement. The Construction Unit will work with the Divisions and review these situations on a case-by-case basis.

Contract Authority

- For On-Call contracts, NCDOT asked that Resident Engineers be notified when the last invoice of a Task/PO is submitted. Once the last invoice is processed the Task/PO can be closed out and any remaining fund be made available.

Changes to CEI Guidelines

- For Military experience to count for salary calculations the experience needs to be directly related to Highway Construction. The related experience shall be counted on a 1 to 1 basis. This will be added to the Guidelines.
- Discussed the various interpretations of the Guidelines as it pertains to experience credit for engineering degrees, as well as FE and PE attainment in technician positions. It was decided that a small work group should be formed to review and update the

Guidelines as necessary. The group members are as follows: Philip Johnson, Kevin O'Dell, Wiley Jones, Maira Ibarra and a State Personnel representative. NCDOT noted that their intent is to align CEI experience evaluations with NCDOT HR guidelines.

2023 On-Call Advertisement

- A minor change will be made to the 2023 Statewide CEI On-Call scoring criteria. *Previous Performance* will change from 20% of the score to 30%, and *Previous Experience* will change from 30% to 20%.
- To assist with performance evaluations, each Resident Engineer's required 6-month firm evaluation will now be performed electronically. This will allow NCDOT to better track evaluations and ensure they are being completed. Firms should follow up with Resident Engineers if they are not currently being evaluated.
- The contract is expected to advertise on June 1, 2023, with a due date of June 30th, 2023. Contracts will be executed in/prior to November 2023.

Salary Calculator Interpretations

- A recurring issue has been identified with technician salary determinations where a Division is discounting qualified years of experience because the technician does not have all his/her certifications that may not be needed immediately. An example would be a technician being hired to perform paving operation inspections and their experience is discounted for not having a concrete certification. In some cases, the technician may not be allowed the time to take the additional certification. The industry continues to pursue certifications for our techs. NCDOT will review this situation and confirmed that the intent of the salary calculator is to reimburse the applicable rate without deductions. Others countered that the salary calculator should be a guideline, to which the industry representatives disagreed. This will be discussed as part of the work group.

Wake Tech

- It was announced that Wake Tech now has Work Based Learning and Apprenticeship programs where a student can receive college credit for working. A promising opportunity for the DOT and industry firms to bring in new people. It was noted that Wake Tech students in certain degree programs graduate with their ACI, conventional density, and ABC sampling certifications; M&T desires to add QMS to their certification opportunities, as well.

Upcoming Projects

- **2023 On-Call Agreement** Advertised June 1, 2023 To be executed November 2023
 - Criteria will be same except previous performance will be weighed 30 percent and previous experience will be 20 percent.

- **R-2829 A / B** Turnpike Complete 540 Let July 2023- Advertised: March 2023, Oral Interviews May 2023
- **U-4758** Removed from Anticipated Advertisements list. Letting has been pushed to Summer 2024. It may be re-added.

- The Anticipated Advertisement page has been updated.
<https://connect.ncdot.gov/letting/ProfessionalServices/Pages/anticipatedadverts.aspx>

Next NCDOT/ACEC Meeting: July 19, 2023, at 1:00 pm