

## NHA Honors Wesley E. Freise, P.E. for Contributions to Region

"Civil engineers build the mightiest works of men."

This quote is quite possibly responsible for Harris County's Toll Road System being the way it is today.

At the age of 12, a boy named Wesley asked his mother what civil engineers do. His mother replied that she wasn't sure, but she didn't brush off her son's question. Instead, she obtained a book about civil engineering for Wesley to discover the answer himself.

After reading the book (the title escapes him today), the details were forgotten, except that one quote.

Wesley E. Freise, P.E., executive director of the Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA), fondly relayed this story to friends, family and colleagues at a recent dinner in honoring his contributions.

If anyone can pack a room, Freise can. About 500 people turned out on November 13 to express their appreciation for the countless hours he has spent to improve the region's mobility.

A number of NHA members sponsored the event: Bank One, Brown & Gay Engineers, Inc., Brown & Root/Halliburton Company, Carter & Burgess, Cobourn, Linseisen & Ratcliff, Inc., Continental Airlines, Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation, Fulbright & Jaworski, Gilbane Building Company, Greater Greenspoint District, HNTB Corporation, Huitt-Zollars, Inc., Senator Jon Lindsay, JNS Consulting Engineers, Inc., Klotz Associates, Inc., LJA Engineering & Surveying, Inc., Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam, Inc., Michael Baker Jr., Inc., Montgomery & Associates, Othon, Inc., Pate Engineers, Inc., PBS&J, PGAL, The Woodlands Operating Company, Thompson Professional Group, Inc., Turner Collie & Braden, Inc., Union Pacific Railroad Company, Vinson & Elkins, Walter P. Moore, Wolff Companies and WSBC Civil Engineers.

A large number of dignitaries were present, including Senator Jon Lindsay, NHA president, Harris County Judge

Robert Eckels, Harris County Commissioners Eversole, El Franco Lee and Steve Radack, and Texas Department of Transportation District Engineer Gary Trietsch.

The North Houston Association's Board of Directors presented Freise with a resolution commending him for his dedication to the improvement of regional mobility in the greater Houston area and wishing him "best regards with and offering support of his ongoing and future mobility endeavors in the north Houston region."

Freise has worked for HCTRA since 1984, where he has overseen all phases of design and construction in addition to setting the structure for toll operations and collections.

The Harris County Roll Road network might have been completed if young Wesley had never read that book, but without his influence, insight, and expertise, it most surely would not have been the system it is today. ■



Wesley E. Freise, P.E. and his wife Patti, listen to introductory remarks made by NHA Chairman Dennis Petersen, P.E. at the appreciation dinner in Freise's honor.

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### From the President...

On January 9th, if not before, I'll be off to Austin for the 77th Texas Legislative Session. I'd like to tell you about an important bill I filed at the end of November - Senate Bill 123.

This bill changes the appointed representation on the Houston Metro Board of Directors. It alters the number of positions appointed by the city of Houston, Harris County Commissioners Court, and the mayors and county judges of the other cities and counties within the Houston Metro service area.

I have very sound reasoning for this bill. The last decade has seen tremendous growth in the suburban areas. According to the University of Houston Center for Public Policy, 97 percent of the growth in the area has been outside of the city limits of Houston, and this expansion is predicted to continue. The study also noted that well over 90 percent of the jobs created in the near future will be outside of the city. In my opinion, this trend should translate into better representation for the folks who live outside of the city of Houston, but inside the Metro service area.

Currently, the mayor of Houston controls five members, or a majority, of the Metro Board, which oversees the transportation needs of the millions of citizens in the greater Harris County area. Senate Bill 123 gives the city of Houston four appointees on the board, Harris County Commissioner's Court three appointees, and the multi-city mayors and judges two appointees. This institutes a checks and balance dynamic. The bill is a fair, balanced proposal designed to spread the decision-making concerning our area's transportation needs throughout the greater Houston metropolitan area so that all citizens are fairly represented.

*Senator Jon Lindsay*

## Wright Hired as New NHA Executive Director

The North Houston Association has hired Carolyn S. Wright to serve as its new executive director, replacing Catherine Wray, who resigned from the position in late September.

"Carolyn has more than ten years of experience in business development and marketing, which is key to the continued growth of the North Houston Association," said Senator Jon Lindsay, president. "Expansion of NHA's membership base is essential to continue our projects and programs that benefit the north Houston region."

Wright was the president of the Houston West Chamber of Commerce for five years, where she successfully increased membership and profitability. While at the chamber, Wright was involved in business and community initiatives associated with promoting economic development, local and international business opportunities, community long-range objectives and quality of life concerns.

Prior to her work at the Houston West Chamber, she was the president of the Friendswood Chamber of Commerce for six years.

"I look forward to the challenge of working for a regional organization and learning about the unique issues that it faces. I hope to utilize my marketing and strategic planning skills to expand the membership of the North Houston Association. But most of all, I want to learn about the expectations of the membership and the community so the Association can continue to meet the needs of the region," said Wright.

"There are similarities between chambers and the Association, however, one of the things that attracted me to this position is the number of differences between the two types of organizations. I look forward to being part of the larger picture in this dynamic region, working for an organization dedicated to regional issues."

Wright is a member of Leadership

Texas and Leadership Houston. She is also a member of the National Association of Membership Development and the Gulf Coast Chamber Executive Association, and is on the board of directors of the Jabboury Foundation and the YMCA - Greater Houston Area. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia, is a licensed real estate agent and graduated from the Chamber of Commerce Institute at Southern Methodist University. ■



*Carolyn S. Wright*

## NHA Welcomes New Members

Membership testimonials are key to growing the Association's membership. An excellent example of this can be seen with one of NHA's newest members, Michael Baker Jr., Inc.

The firm's vice president, David Millikan, was involved with the Association before joining Michael Baker Jr., Inc. Millikan saw the value in being a member of the Association, and joined NHA at his new place of employment.

Michael Baker Jr., Inc. is the engineering design subsidiary of Michael Baker Corporation. Baker's staff of more than 3,500 is engaged in design/management services and operations/maintenance activities for infrastructure projects throughout the world.

The Houston office of Michael Baker Jr., Inc., offers transportation, municipal, water resources, aviation and pipeline engineering services to public and private sector clients. Currently, its most high-profile project is lead consultant for an engineering location study, an assessment of environmental impacts, and preparation of the draft and final environmental impact statements for four segments of SH 99, the Grand Parkway, from IH 10 (W) to US 59 (N) in Harris and Montgomery Counties.

Having maintained an office in Houston since 1970, Baker is sold on Houston. Michael Baker Jr., Inc. has recently increased its commitment to the community by establishing Houston as the headquarters of its Western Region. An affiliated company, Baker Energy, already has its corporate headquarters in Houston. With a staff of more than 800, Baker Energy is the largest provider of contract operations

and maintenance personnel to the energy industry in the Gulf of Mexico.

URS Corporation joined the Association in December. The firm provides comprehensive professional services in planning, engineering, environmental and applied sciences, and program and construction management to a diverse group of public and private clients worldwide. URS provides services for infrastructure projects involving air and surface transportation systems; institutional, industrial, and commercial facilities; water resources; and pollution control and hazardous waste management programs. The company has about 350 established offices in 38 countries with more than 16,000 employees.

PGAL joined NHA in the fourth quarter, and has positioned itself as a design and management firm which is poised to assist clients to articulate their strategic vision and implement facilities development programs that align with their vision in a creative and cost-effective manner.

PGAL has assembled a team of diversified design professionals that has specialized expertise in data collection, analysis, consensus building, planning, design, documentation, communication, project implementation and program management.

The firm serves as facilitator, designer and planner. PGAL's team of architects, interior architects, engineers and planners is able to deliver "high design". More importantly, PGAL knows how to assist clients as they analyze their strategic plan and uncover their unique facilities planning issues, both qualitative and quantitative.

The PGAL team extracts an organization's culture, mission statement and philosophy, constantly

searching for the linkages between the organization's operation and the required facilities. The PGAL team is trained in group dynamics, information management and consensus planning.

The firm has developed a design methodology that responds in a manner which captures a client's vision and adds focus and value to their facilities planning decisions.

Vesta Rea & Associates, L.L.C. (VRA) also joined the Association in December. The firm is one of the leading transportation-marketing strategist and political consulting firms in the nation. The firm for more than a decade has assisted engineers, architects, planners and construction management firms in the pursuit of major transportation projects throughout the United States.

VRA specializes in the development and implementation of public relations programs. They support their



clients with sound awareness and attitude tracking based around comprehensive research obtained through surveys, focus groups, interviews and innovative techniques.

The firm coordinates highly successful public outreach meetings and hearings, diffusing public opposition and educating the community on the economic and overall benefits of transportation and infrastructure programs.

VRA's political and professional network allows clients powerful resources to make positive things happen when involving project funding and sponsorship. The firm is a certified WBE/HUB firm with more than 25 agencies throughout the United States. VRA is also certified with the U.S. Small Business Administration. ■

### Mark Froehlich, P.E., Pate Engineers, Inc.

Mark Froehlich, P.E., senior project manager for Pate Engineers, Inc., has much to be proud of.

In November, Pate celebrated 30 years of providing consulting civil engineering services to clients throughout the greater Houston area. The engineering firm was also recently ranked among the top 100 fastest growing firms by the *Houston Business Journal*.

Generally, civil engineering is comprised of relatively low-profile, behind the scenes work, according to Froehlich.

"Most civil engineering projects don't stand out to the average citizen, however they play a very basic and important role in everyday life," he said. "A recent challenging project I managed involved providing utility service to a 30-acre tract of land that was isolated from service by the FM 1960/Veterans Memorial intersection."

In order to complete the project, the design had to include four separate utility crossings of the highly developed and congested roadways.

As part of procuring an easement from a particular land owner, the design had to include

several bore and auger sections under some highly-valued and well-established Post Oak trees. Severe penalties would have resulted if the trees had died. Fortunately for everyone, this did not happen.

To many, it seems as if development just pops up overnight, but many projects, such as this one, take literally years of effort and compromise to successfully complete.

Froehlich was sympathetic to the land owner's stipulation that the trees be saved. In fact, he has been a Harris County Master Gardener since 1993. In this role, he disseminates horticultural information to the community.

He recently made a presentation on "Water Wise Landscaping" to the Association of Water



Board Directors (AWBD), a group of Municipal Utility District directors from throughout Texas, at its annual meeting. He regularly speaks to elementary school students, garden clubs and other groups on various horticultural subjects.

Froehlich enjoys consulting with individuals about their landscapes and also providing computer-aided landscape designs. In fact, his back yard is designated as a "Backyard Wildlife Habitat" by the National Wildlife Federation. He has recently served as Chairman of the Board of Lay Ministry and as Congregation President at Epiphany Lutheran Church.

He is currently involved in the church's choir, Evangelism Board and he teaches an adult Bible class.

"The rest of my time is spent with my family," he said. "That's really the most important thing and what I'm most proud of."

His wife Jean is a teaching assistant in CyFair ISD. His sons Phillip and Matthew attend Texas A&M University and his daughter Lauren is a senior at Langham Creek High School. ■

### Bruce Hillegeist, Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce

Webster defines "genuine" as "really being what it is said to be; true; sincere."

At first impression, NHA Board Member Bruce Hillegeist, appears too "genuine" to be true. But he isn't.

He was two minutes late for his interview for this article; when the interview was complete, he apologized for being late, explaining that he was helping an elderly lady (during his lunch hour) with family problems.

Hillegeist, president of the Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce, doesn't just do these acts of kindness during the holiday season; they are a way of life for him.

"I've seen how people have bonded here at the chamber. I stress that building relationships is important, and if our members do this, they will succeed," he said.

"They (volunteers) are the chamber, not me. I always want to stay behind the scenes and promote them."

"The chamber is a one-stop shop; we fill a lot of different needs here. We share an office with Tomball College's Center for Business and Economic Development and the Tomball Economic Development Corporation. The chamber does a lot of work on govern-

ment and legislative affairs as well as transportation issues."

The chamber is hooked up to today's technology. Not only does it have a website, but is the first chamber to be chosen to partner with KHOU-TV as the television station begins to introduce chamber website links on its home page. In addition, Yahoo's Internet Life magazine will soon feature the chamber in a story on small towns using websites.

However, Hillegeist is dedicated to taking care of those businesses who have storefronts in Tomball, after all, he's lived there all his life. His family owned a dairy and raised cotton and corn. Hillegeist's dream was to become a banker, just like his father.

After graduating from Sam Houston State University, he went to work for First Bank and Trust in Tomball. He could have started at a mid-level position at the bank, but instead chose to begin in bookkeeping. He wanted to work his way up, earning the respect of his coworkers along the way and experiencing the entire view of banking.

In 1994, he accepted his post at the chamber, after working in banking for 13 years.

"I got involved with the chamber as a

member when I was working as a marketing manager at First Bank and Trust. It opened many doors for me. It was then that I learned that being a member of a chamber isn't something that can help you overnight. It evolves over time and pays off. This is why it's easy for me to sell memberships to the chamber today. I believe in it because I've experienced it first-hand," said Hillegeist.

Hillegeist is a member of Salem Lutheran Church, the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo's Jr. Commercial Steer Committee, is a past president of the Gulf Coast Chamber Executives and serves as a Texas Chamber of Commerce Board Member. ■



### Alan Clark, H-GAC, Gives Air Quality Status Report

NHA Business Issues & Resources Committee members received updated information on the region's air quality at the committee's November meeting.

Alan Clark, MPO director, Houston-Galveston Area Council, presented an "Air Quality Status Report", which summarized the recommendations of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission's Executive Director, Jeff Saitas.

The emission reduction strategy broke down pollutants into the following categories: industry, diesel fuel, construction, voluntary MEP, I/M program, and "gap" measures.

Clark said he expects a "mid-course correction plan" three years from now, to make adjustments to the original plan, based on actual results.

Some of the mandatory limits being considered include shifting construction work from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. to noon - midnight, lowering of speed limits, prohibiting L&G contractor activity until noon, and delaying the start of school until early September by compressing the school year.

Clark noted he thought legislation soon would be introduced to compress the school year.

"Reducing travel caused by school activities can result in lower emissions during the months when ozone is the worst," he said.

Historically, the summer months are when the region has the most ozone problems.

Committee members asked Senator Lindsay, NHA president, about the legislation on schools. Lindsay replied that he has seen some draft legislation that exempts year-round schools.

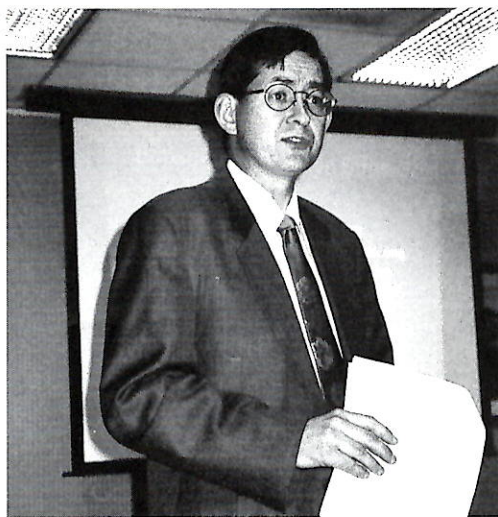
Federal Clean Air Act sanc-

tions may include the delay of transportation projects and/or loss of transportation funds, increased restrictions on new and expanded businesses and a mandated federally-controlled plan.

The end of December is the deadline for the eight-county region (Harris, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Montgomery, Chambers and Waller) to submit its plan to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The USEPA has until mid-October 2001 to approve or deny the plan. If the plan is denied, the USEPA will step in and regulate the plan. In that case, it would be a federal plan until the state develops one that wins approval by the USEPA.

The North Houston Association will continue to follow this issue, as it has for a number of years, and keep its membership informed.

To receive a copy of Clark's Air Quality Status Report, contact the NHA office by phone (281-875-0660) or e-mail ([northhouston@wt.net](mailto:northhouston@wt.net)). ■



*Alan Clark, MPO director for the Houston-Galveston Area Council, spoke to NHA's Business Issues & Resources Committee about the effects of the Clean Air Act on*

### Commissioner John Johnson to Speak at February Luncheon

Commissioner John W. Johnson, Texas Transportation Commission (TTC), will speak at the next NHA Membership Luncheon, to be held February 16, 2001. HNTB is serving as the event underwriter.

The event, to be held at the Greenspoint Marriott, will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The hotel is located at 255 N. Sam Houston Parkway East.

Individual seating for members costs \$40 and tables of ten are \$400. Individual seating for non-members costs \$50 and tables of ten are \$500.

Johnson is also chairman of the TTC, which oversees statewide activities of the Texas Department of Transportation.

Gov. George W. Bush appointed Johnson as a member of the commission in February 1999, and he became commissioner in April 2000.

Johnson is chairman of Permian Mud Service, Inc. and chairman of the executive committee of its subsidiary, Champion Technologies Inc. He is also chairman of the executive committee of the Southwest Bank of Texas.

### Teleworking Workshop Scheduled

Fred Ewald, of Ewald Associates in Philadelphia, will lead a workshop to educate employers on initiating a teleworking program.

The session will be held Wednesday, January 31 from 9 a.m. to noon at Swift Energy Company's lunchroom (16825 Northchase Drive, 5th floor).

To make reservations, contact Pat Wisniewski in the NHA office (281-875-0660 or [wisniewskip@wt.net](mailto:wisniewskip@wt.net)). ■

## Upcoming Events

### NHA Committee Meetings

#### Board of Directors

Dates: Jan. 9, Feb. 13, Mar. 13  
Time: 7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.  
Place: The Greenspoint Club  
R.S.V.P.: 281-875-0660 (regrets only)

#### Business Issues & Resources

Dates: Jan. 26, Feb. 23, Mar. 23  
Time: 8:30 a.m.  
Place: Greenspoint Conference Center  
R.S.V.P.: 281-875-0660

#### Environment

Dates: Jan. 11, Feb. 8, Mar. 8  
Time: 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
Place: Greenspoint Conference Center  
R.S.V.P.: 281-875-0660

#### Transportation

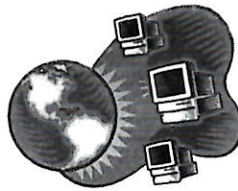
Dates: Jan. 24, Feb. 28, Mar. 28  
Time: 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
Place: Greenspoint Conference Center  
R.S.V.P.: 281-875-0660

### Workforce Development and all Subcommittees

Watch the weekly *Friday Facts* for details or call (281-875-0660).

### How to Reach Us Via E-Mail...

Senator Jon Lindsay: [lindsayj@wt.net](mailto:lindsayj@wt.net)  
Carolyn S. Wright: [wrightc@wt.net](mailto:wrightc@wt.net)  
Patricia Wisniewski: [wisniewskip@wt.net](mailto:wisniewskip@wt.net)  
Marlisa Stanley: [stanleyem@wt.net](mailto:stanleyem@wt.net)  
Judy Granata: [northhouston@wt.net](mailto:northhouston@wt.net)



### Special thanks to the following underwriters of this issue:



HUITT-ZOLLARS



#### NORTH HOUSTON ASSOCIATION

16825 Northchase Dr., Ste. 160  
Houston, Texas 77060  
Phone: 281/875-0660  
Fax: 281/875-0663

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