Recognizing Excellence as we Grow

I believe that one of the things we do best at FHI is hire exceptional people -- we have some amazing talent. And I’m thrilled to announce some recent changes in our organization that recognize strong leaders and put them into positions that will help shape our future. Our growth over the past few years has required us to rethink our organizational structure. How do we ensure our future vitality while still strongly reflecting our vision and core values?

We have three key priorities at FHI: 1. Provide exceptional client service 2. Create a unique and supportive work culture that promotes continual learning and professional development 3. Add extra value to our projects through innovative thinking and strategic problem solving. To ensure we focus on these priorities, three highly talented (or should I say “more talented”) professionals will lead each of these dimensions of FHI. Each was selected based on their specific strengths and focus they have demonstrated throughout their careers. I’m therefore proud to announce three new Vice President positions at FHI:

Ken Livingston as our Vice President of Projects and Client Services. Simply put, it’s Ken’s job to keep all the balls in the air for both project delivery and proposals. Working closely with our Service Line Leaders, Ken has an amazing ability to multi-task, solve problems, and provide resources and support; both internally and to our clients.

Carla Tillery as our Vice President of Operations. Carla is the machine that keeps FHI going. She oversees Human Resources, Staff Development, IT, Office Management, Communications, Licensing, and Finance and Accounting. Carla is probably the most organized and level-headed person I know. I admire her energy, her coaching and mentoring capabilities, the highly productive way she runs meetings, and her frank communication style.

Mike Morehouse as our Vice President of Strategy and Innovation. Those of you who know Mike understand his expertise in strategic thinking, creativity, and “outside the box” solutions. Mike consistently challenges us all to balance engineering practicalities with innovative and holistic approaches. In this position, he will work internally with staff to facilitate a culture of continuous learning and to ensure we give our clients leading-edge solutions to real world problems.

Looking at FHI, I am proud to say I took that long-ago advice to hire people with different and, dare I admit, more talent than myself. The result is a diverse team of leaders who will drive our future success. I feel extremely lucky to get to work with this talented group of people whom are both my colleagues and my friends.

Susan VanBenschoten
President/CEO

Ken, Susan, Carla, and Mike
Bringing their individual perspectives to the table.

Learning to love transit at an early age. Keaton Henry (Chris Henry’s son) shown here en route to the Jersey shore for vacation. A great example of FHI staff living our values. (And a great example of Chris Henry’s photography skills).

Ken is the first person I call whenever I have a problem, and he’s always quick to provide solutions.

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It’s all about teamwork! Each of us bring different strengths to the table, and we work together to take advantage of each of our unique skill sets. I often think of it like a puzzle where each piece plays an important part in defining the whole organization. In future newsletters, you will hear from each of these leaders about their part of FHI’s business - from their perspective.

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FHI is proud to have led several Transit Oriented Development (TOD) studies this year. The Wallingford TOD Study, highlighted here, was carried out in response to the upcoming Hartford Line rail service and construction of a new station in town. With connections to Hartford, New Haven, and Springfield, the Hartford Line will triple the number of trains serving Wallingford daily. TOD projects encourage a comprehensive approach to transportation and land use planning. TOD also uses street amenities to create a sense of place; accommodating people who frequent local businesses and those who live in surrounding neighborhoods.

The Wallingford Station TOD Study focused on a three-quarter mile radius around the new train station that is currently under construction. The location of the new station currently offers little for the pedestrian or bicyclist planning to navigate to downtown. FHI created a design that provides better accommodations for pedestrians, an on-street bicycle lane, and a dedicated parking lane. These improvements create a stronger multimodal link to the downtown and increase overall safety. TOD should provide a mix of goods and services within walking distance of the station so that travelers and residents have easy access to shops, restaurants, and amenities. By establishing a connection to downtown Wallingford, the improved North Colony Street design is expected to bolster downtown business, while also accommodating residents in the nearby neighborhoods and promoting increased train ridership.

Residential development is a key component of TOD and played an important role in this planning effort. FHI’s sub consultant, AMS Consulting, performed an extensive market analysis which revealed that Wallingford would benefit from additional housing options, specifically rental housing. These findings informed the build-out scenario for the TOD study area. FHI recommendations include a mix of development types including apartment buildings and townhouses to accommodate a range of lifestyles. Mixed-use buildings with retail, restaurant, and office uses on the ground floor and residential units are proposed. The development recommendations provide Wallingford with a realistic plan for better integration of transportation, land use, and economic development in the study area.

TOD is about creating places where people have housing options, access to transit, good connections between modes of travel, and are able to live their lives without relying on automobile travel. The Wallingford TOD study provides development strategies to fulfill these goals while integrating seamlessly with surrounding neighborhoods. For more information, contact Rory Fitzgerald, rfitzgerald@fhiplan.com.
**Anthony Zemba** led a guided hike with State Representative (District 34 at Connecticut General Assembly) Melissa Ziobron at Devil’s Hopyard State Park. For State Parks and Forest Day, Anthony led discussions about the native flora, fauna, history, and ecology of the park and the Eight-mile River riparian corridor (which has attained National Wild and Scenic River designation status).

Anthony on right pauses for a photo op with State Representative Melissa Ziobron and her aide Daniel Davis on the trail at Devil’s Hopyard State Park.

**Buenos dias Connecticut radio audience!** **Michael Coulom** (back left) sat down with Felix Viera’s morning show Hablando en Serio on La Puertorriqueñisima 1120 AM to discuss an upcoming all-Spanish public meeting for the I-84 Hartford Project. Michael was joined by Randal Davis and Rosmery Rodriguez of the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

**Move over Ellen, there’s a new talk show host in town!** **Carla Tillery** brought her fun and informative talk show-style session to the WTS International conference in Austin, Texas. Carla explored generational differences in the workplace with a standing-room-only crowd.

**FHI staff have been introducing students in New York and Connecticut to the field of planning with some really fun and informative results. Check out our Fall newsletter for more details...**

**How did you travel to work on May 20th?**

If you’re anything like FHI staff, you rode your bike, of course! For 2016 Bike to Work Day, New York staff biked into the office. This is the regular mode choice for many of our Big Apple commuters. In Hartford, staff also biked in and attended a special event at the Old State House with CTDOT Commissioner Jim Redeker. Whatever city you were in, it was a glorious day for a bike ride!

**Shawn Callaghan and Dan Hageman** clowning around with third graders after teaching a conservation planning lesson.

**Chris Henry** enjoyed this view from his bike on the morning commute in NYC.
Staff Notes

FHI was out in full force at this year’s Women’s Transportation Seminar – CT Chapter Annual Awards Ceremony to congratulate all the folks who help improve transportation in Connecticut.

Carla Tillery, Laurel Stegina, Stephanie Dyer-Carroll and Sandy Nafis were at the WTS CT Chapter awards ceremony at Saint Clements Castle in Portland, CT. Shawna Kitzman, Mike Morehouse, and Susan VanBenschoten not pictured.

We are thrilled to welcome the newest member of the FHI family into the world: Hudson James Pineda. Melissa Pineda and family welcomed their second son in May. The big bundle of joy was 21 inches long and 9.1 lbs when he was born! He is now over 11lbs! Love the bow tie!!

Sandy Nafis and Kate Skaff traveled to Disney World in Orlando, Florida for the Ajera Users Association National conference. In between learning the ins-and-outs of this Accounting and Project Management software for the A&E industry, they had time to take in some Disney fun. No picture with Mickey Mouse ears, unfortunately.

Kristen Ahlfeld, Chris Henry, Jessica Ortiz, and Leslie Black in Atlantic City at this year’s NJ TransAction conference. Shown here at the FHI booth, they were pleased to connect with colleagues and enjoyed the various workshops and speakers.
While most of New York City is well served by public transportation, not all services are friendly to people with mobility challenges. The New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) is striving to coordinate and improve transportation opportunities for people with disabilities, older adults, and low income populations. In an effort to create services and programs for this target population, NYCDOT brought together 150 mobility managers, travel trainers, transit providers, project managers, government officials, and advocates at its 4th Annual Mobility Management Conference in May.

As conference coordinators, FHI helped develop a panel discussion on “The Role of Health in Transportation”, recruited the keynote speaker, and led the afternoon workshop. Panelists and speakers from many agencies* were brought together to share their experiences. One organization, InTandem, described using tandem bicycles with a guiding front rider, providing biking opportunities to New Yorkers who are not able to cycle on their own.

The keynote speaker, Yingling Fan of the University of Minnesota, gave a memorable talk about the role of transportation in emotionally intelligent cities. Professor Fan is studying the role of happiness across trip modes and ways in which urban planning and transportation policy has implications to both travel and happiness. For example, Professor Fan has found that bicycling positively affects happiness scoring for the general public. She also noted that persons with any kind of disability had lower happiness scores while traveling than any other population group.

The conference workshop used happiness in transportation as its overarching theme. An opening icebreaker asked participants their interest in five key areas: physical improvements, coordinated planning, public engagement, data collection, and transportation service clearinghouse. Participants moved from one theme to another depending on their responses to various prompt questions asked by FHI’s Arnie Bloch, the workshop facilitator. These themes then moved to table discussions where FHI’s Maura Fitzpatrick, Ryan Walsh, and Chris Henry, along with AECOM and NYCDOT staff, led discussions and summarized the participants’ input. Conference attendees responded that they found the active and collaborative approach “refreshing” and “unique”.

FHI was thrilled to participate in this important event to better address access to the city’s transportation system for persons with mobility challenges. For more information, contact Jessica Ortiz, jortiz@fhiplan.com.

* Included: FHA, FTA, City Harvest, NYC Department for the Aging, InTandem, New York State Department of Health, Cornell University, and the University of Minnesota
Staff Notes

Francisco Gomes and Mary Miltimore traveled to Colorado for the 2016 Sketchup Boot camp. The conference offered hands-on training in Sketchup 3D modelling in Steamboat Springs; a fantastic venue with miles of riverfront paths and hiking trails.

Sketchup 3D models are powerful tools to help people visualize how their communities can be improved.

The tram was a welcome treat for weary feet after a long day at the Sketchup conference.

The Further Adventures of the Traveling Corkscrew

The corkscrew hitched a ride on Parker Sorenson’s bike for a 698-mile bike ride from San Francisco to the Mexican border. A not yet exhausted Parker is pictured here at the start of his ride at San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge.

Debbie Hoffman started summer early in Huntington Beach, South Carolina.