

AN INTERVIEW WITH SCOTT THOMAS, OWNER OF APEX DESIGN, PC: HOW ACEC/CO MEMBERSHIP AND THE CDOT MENTOR/PROTÉGÉ PROGRAM BENEFIT SMALL FIRMS

What does Apex Design do?

Apex Design is a transportation engineering firm that specializes in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) for local government agencies and private developers. We design, engineer and implement technology-based solutions that improve traffic flow and increase the safety and efficiency of public transportation.



Scott Thomas, owner,
Apex Design, PC

How did you get started?

I met my business partners, Jason Osaki, now CEO of Apex Design, and Nate Algoe, co-owner, when we worked on the T-REX

design/build project. After we completed our work on T-REX, we continued working together as on-staff consultants at the CDOT Colorado Transportation Management Center. We founded Apex Design after realizing the need for more sophisticated ITS solutions in Colorado. We offer our clients engineering design expertise and practical field experience to produce solutions that are both constructible and maintainable. That is Apex Design's greatest strength.

What benefits have you received from your ACEC membership?

One of the first things we did as a new firm was to take the advice of Bob Felsburg of Felsburg Holt & Ullevig, who first encouraged us to join ACEC. We trusted his opinion because he has been a valuable mentor to us. Since then, ACEC has helped us grow both personally and professionally. There have been numerous opportunities to get involved and we have taken advantage of several of them. For instance, I am on the Transportation Committee which has opened up many new networking opportunities. Also, Nate and I enrolled in the upcoming Future Leaders Seminars. Apex Design was also fortunate enough to be selected for the CDOT/ACEC Mentor-Protégé Program.

What has your experience been with the CDOT/ACEC Mentor-Protégé Program?

As a small business, the program has given us opportunities we would not have otherwise been afforded. We have been paired with Steve Smith of Parsons and he has shared invaluable lessons and knowledge with us regarding project management, teaming and business development. Steve's advice has been directly incorporated into our business practices to help us better manage projects and, ultimately, our clients. Through the program and CDOT's generosity, we have been able to work with Folsom Point, a consulting firm that is helping us with strategic planning and business development.

How has the Mentor-Protégé Program enhanced your capabilities?

Apex Design has had measurable success since entering the program. Within the past six months we won several projects including the Douglas County Communications Master Plan, the City of Greeley Signal System Master Plan, and most recently, the SH-72 Signal Interconnect Design in CDOT Region 6. We have a 100% customer satisfaction rating and continue to grow across the Rocky Mountain region.

Have you received any special recognition?

This past summer we received 1st Place in the University of Colorado's Bard Center Business Plan Competition. The competition's rigorous review process includes the submission of a business plan that was critiqued by experts and qualified based upon merit, financial soundness and long-term viability. Apex Design was selected from 40 businesses representing a cross-section of technology, engineering, biomedical and retail. Apex Design secured its first place win by demonstrating technical innovation, depth of experience in ITS and sustained growth.

What new trends are you seeing related to ITS?

Real-time traveler information is emerging as a valuable tool for congestion management. The trip travel time information available on the overhead electronic message signs along I-70 between Denver and Vail has been a successful pilot project and should be the first of many deployed around the metro area. We are also seeing more public agencies creating traffic operations centers as central hubs to monitor traffic similar to the one that utilizes the video wall we designed for CDOT. And we are noticing a shift in technologies for communications to traffic devices. For example, we completed 76 miles of communications design for CDOT that was the first to utilize Ethernet. At the local level, we worked with the City of Loveland

to establish Ethernet communications to traffic signals and intersection cameras.

