

Ghana Transportation Professionals Forum of North America (GTPF-NA)

Minutes of the 2018 Annual Meeting

Date: January 9, 2018

Venue: Marriot Marquis, Washington, D.C.

Attendance: Over 60 members (See list* at end of this document)

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Dr. Senanu Ashiabor, the out-going president. The meeting was started by a round of self-introductions. The proceedings of the meeting are summarized below:

1. Updates from Executive Members

- **President – Dr. Senanu Ashiabor**

The outgoing president first gave a brief introduction about the organization since we had many new members attending the meeting for the first time. He talked about who we are, what we do and who can become a member of the organization. He then provided updates of the activities of the past year (2017). Particularly, he explained why the infrastructure conference that had been scheduled to be held in Ghana in 2017 was postponed to August 2018. He acknowledged the efforts of Dr. Dan Seedah in organizing webinars for the group and thanked members for participating in such professional development opportunities. Dr. Ashiabor encouraged members to patronize these webinars to solidify our networking. He introduced members who were attending the meeting for the first time to our website by navigating through the various sections. Finally, he touched on our newsletter feed and urged members to read and share with other professionals who might be interested in our group.

- **Webinar Coordinator – Dr. Dan Seedah**

Dr. Dan Seedah gave a summary of the first two webinars that were organized in 2017. He briefly shared the presentations with members and thanked Dr. Kwaku Boakye and Dr. Kweku Brown for accepting the challenge as guest speakers for the first and the second webinars, respectively. He encouraged members to volunteer as speakers for the next series of the webinars.

- **Communications Coordinator – Dr. Bismark Agbelie**

An update on our communication networks including LinkedIn and WhatsApp was given by Dr. Bismark Agbelie. He explained that over the past year, the WhatsApp group has been an effective tool in connecting members and helped in disseminating information to members of the organization. He also noted that not all members have signed up for the WhatsApp group and encouraged members to do so. Dr. Agbelie acknowledged that our LinkedIn account has been dormant for a while and recommended that we frequently post updates to make our account active.

- **Treasurer – Dr. Margaret-Avis Akofio-Sowah**

The treasurer gave a presentation on the finances of the organization for the past year. She indicated that we had budgeted \$27,000 for running the activities of the organization in 2017, however, due to the cancellation of the Ghana infrastructure conference, our expenditure was far less than what had been budgeted for. Members inquired why the conference was cancelled. Drs. Agbelie and Ashiabor explained that we had issues with planning and logistics and, so it was prudent to postpone the conference to 2018. Dr. Akofio-Sowah further presented the budget for the activities in 2018. Dr. Samuel Owusu-Ababio and Ing. Magnus Quarshie recommended that we increase our corporate budget from \$20,000 to \$50,000, which members agreed. There were concerns as to how we will raise money for the corporate fund. The outgoing president responded by indicating that we get financial sponsorship from private organizations or entities within and outside the United States. Kenneth Tutu moved for the acceptance of the 2018 budget. Dr. Agbelie seconded and members voted to accept the budget.

After voting on the 2018 budget, Dr. Akofio-Sowah touched on membership dues. She commented that we did not meet the budget for our dues last year because of non-payment of dues by some members. The lower dues payment was attributed to the inability of the treasurer to reach out to all the members. To overcome such a problem in the future, Dr. Seedah recommended that we use the WhatsApp group platform to constantly remind members to pay their dues. There were suggestions that the executives should put in more efforts in reaching out to members on membership dues and obligations as some of members indicated that they had never been contacted in that regard.

- **External Coordinator – Dr. Samuel Owusu-Ababio**

The external coordinator together with Dr. Samuel Labi gave a presentation on the plans for the first Ghana Infrastructure Conference scheduled to be held in Accra, Ghana from August 5th to 8th, 2018. The presentation covered the goals of the conference, the planning committee, the guest speakers, the cost for attending, accommodation and the venue for the conference. Dr. Owusu-Ababio also indicated that paper submissions on different topics in the areas of transportation, structures, telecommunication, and other infrastructures will be solicited for podium and poster presentations at the conference. During his presentation, He passed sheets of papers around to solicit for members' ideas on some of the key infrastructure problems that Ghana faces. His goal is to compile the ideas and develop questions for panel discussions during the conference. Several suggestions and recommendations were put forward by members which include the following:

- i. Ing. Collins Boadu Donkor suggested that keynote speakers should not be limited to one or two individuals but that the planning committee should spread their net wide to capture other prominent speakers to grace the event. Ings. Collins and Magnus accepted the challenge to be our point of contact in reaching out to officials in Ghana to attend for the conference.

- ii. Some of the members recommended that contractors should be added to the target participants who were missing from the list given during the presentation.
- iii. Dr. Agbelie said that volunteers will be needed to review papers that will be submitted for presentations at the conference. A sheet was passed around for volunteer reviewers.
- iv. Concerns raised during the presentation included why and how prepared we are to organize the conference, whether we had sponsorships, and what marketing strategies were in place to publicize the conference. Ing. Magnus, Drs. Ababio, Sam Labi, Ms. Mary Kissi and Mr. Alex Adu-Osei all responded to the concerns. They noted that the conference will be a platform to create awareness of the interdependency of Ghana infrastructures which has been overlooked for so many years. Additionally, they indicated that the goal of the conference is to assess the infrastructure needs and challenges of Ghana and to create a formal channel for Ghanaians with expertise living abroad to contribute their quota in developing and improving our infrastructural systems. Dr. Labi noted that the out-going executives have prepared a draft to solicit for sponsorships. Ms. Yaa Amanua Osafo also suggested that our marketing strategy should be two-fold; one for financial sponsorship and the other for publicity.
- v. Student members were concerned that the lack of data availability hinders them from doing research related to problems in Ghana. Ings. Kwabena Bempong and David Addo commented that data are available in Ghana for research except that most people request for data from the wrong sources. He cited Building and Road Research Institute (BRRI) and Ghana Statistical Service as agencies having tons of data for research. Ms. Stephanie also indicated that data on National Household Travel Surveys for Ghana are available online.

2. Networking break

There was a break at 8:30 pm for members to socialize and network. The meeting reconvened at 8:45 pm.

3. Keynote Presentation: Hon. Kwabena Owusu Aduomi, Deputy Minister of Roads and Highways, Ghana.

Honorable Kwasi Amoako-Atta, the Minister of Roads and Highways, Ghana, was to be the keynote speaker at our meeting, but due to his other commitments in Ghana, he asked his Deputy Minister, Honorable Kwabena Aduomi to stand in for him. Honorable Kwasi Amoako-Atta sent his apology to the group for not attending this year's meeting. The Deputy Minister expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to meet GTPF members. He acknowledged the organization's efforts in bringing together Ghanaian experts to deliberate on solving some of the infrastructure problems in Ghana. He was very supportive of our initiative to organize the Ghana infrastructural conference which he deemed will be of great value to the country. Honorable Aduomi indicated that the problems of Ghana are not just limited to road infrastructure but housing, telecommunication, energy, water, port and harbor, many to mention but few. He mentioned that one of the policies of the ruling government is

to improve Ghana's infrastructure, evaluate and complete abandoned projects. Some of the highlights of Honorable Aduomi's speech are summarized below:

- ***Current and Future Road Infrastructure Projects in Ghana***

Honorable listed a number of projects that are either in the proposal phase or are currently under construction. The list included the following:

- i. Construct Abidjan-Lagos 6-lane highway
- ii. Widen Accra-Tema motorway to 6 lanes. This project is under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) concept
- iii. Widen Accra-Kumasi Highway to 6 lanes using PPP concept
- iv. Construct grade separated interchanges to ease traffic congestions in major cities. Examples cited included Kwame Nkrumah, Obestebi Lamptey and Pokuase interchanges in Accra; Suame, Oforikrom and Sofoline interchanges in Kumasi, and other interchanges in Secondi Takoradi and Tamale.
- v. Dualize Old Tafo, Suame and Asore Nkwanta roads
- vi. Construct outer-ring roads in major cities in Accra, Kumasi, Sunyani
- vii. Widen Accra-Tema Beach road
- viii. Replace or maintain major bridges on trunk roads, e.g. Yapei & Bupei roads in the North that leads to landlocked countries
- ix. Replace or maintain ferry docks and construct new ones.
- x. Improve Daboya-Busunu road access across the White Volta
- xi. Improve the roads and bridges in the lower basin in Volivo, Volta. Project funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

- ***Challenges in the Road Sector***

Honorable Aduomi also talked about some of the challenges that the Ministry of Roads and Highways face in Ghana. Key cited examples included:

- i. Failure of roads few months or years after construction: He indicated that poor design and the use of inferior materials by contractors are major contributory factors to the problem.
- ii. Update work methods and standards: The Deputy Minister noted that work methods and standards adopted by agencies such as Building and Road Research Institute (BRR), Ghana Highway Authority (GHA), Department of Federal Roads (DFR), and Department of Urban Roads (DUR), are outdated and recommended revisions.
- iii. Lack of funds to pave roads: Honorable Aduomi reported that about 77% of the roads in Ghana are in earth state. The government's inability to get funds to pave gravel roads into bituminous roads was mentioned as a major challenge for the ministry.
- iv. Mismanagement of available resources: The Honorable said that delays in road construction projects cause the government to pay more than projected budgets due to interest on late payment to contractors. He

indicated that the government has maintenance arrears to pay dating back as far 2014.

- v. The bulk of backlog of road maintenance and repairs was also stated as a challenge for the Road Ministry.
- vi. Raising revenues and taxes is a challenge for the government. Though some agencies (e.g. Ghana Cocoa Board) help with funds, the Minister noted that the funds are sometimes misappropriated.
- vii. No funds to develop economic activity centers or hinterlands.

- **Other comments from the Deputy Minister**

- i. The vice president is in China for funds to develop major road infrastructure in Ghana.
- ii. Ghana will be adopting the PPP concept for most of the proposed projects in the future.
- iii. The Minister also indicated that current and proposed projects will create job opportunities for many Ghanaians at home and abroad. Specifically, he mentioned that GTPF members will be of great value to Ghana with their expertise and qualified skills to help in the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of road infrastructures in the country. He expressed the ministry's interest to contact our group for consulting services and commended the group for our willingness to help with infrastructure development.

After the Deputy Minister's speech, the floor was opened for questions and answers. The questions were related to road funds, contractual agreements with foreign and local contractors, PPP concepts, strategies to enforce or monitor revenues, tax implementation and prioritization of projects.

Honorable Aduomi responded to majority of the questions with supportive comments from delegates from Ghana. There were other suggestions and recommendations from members present

4. 2018 Transportation Research Board (TRB) Student Award

At each year's annual meeting, the executives of GTPF-NA award Ghanaian student(s) with the highest number of presentations at the TRB Annual Conference. For the third edition of the award, Kwaku Boakye and Kweku Brown were the recipients of the award (\$ 100 gift card), each making two presentations during the conference.

5. Ghana Institution of Engineers – Ing. Kwabena Bempong

Ing. Kwabena Bempong, a member of GhIE encouraged students and professionals outside Ghana to register as members of GhIE. He outlined several benefits that individual members will gain upon joining the group. According to Ing. Bempong, GhIE now registers Professional Engineers, Professional Engineering Technologists, Engineering Technicians and Engineering Craftmen. He indicated that Engineers who obtained their license abroad (e.g. PE) will not be able to practice their profession unless they are registered as members of

GhIE under the Engineering Council Act, 2011 (819). Ing. Bempong arranged for interviews to meet students and professionals who were interested in becoming members of GhIE.

6. Elections

The outgoing president of GTPF-NA called for nominations for new executives since his team had already served two terms. According to GTPF-NA constitution, elections are to be held biannually to elect new officers. After nominations and voting, the following individuals were elected to hold these executive positions:

President – Dr. Dan Seedah

Vice President – Dr. Margaret-Avis Akofio-Sowah

Secretary - Dr. Kwaku Boakye

Treasurer - Dr. Stephanie Amoaning-Yankson

7. Group Picture

After the elections, members present gathered for group pictures.

8. Comments & Closing Remarks from Incoming President – Dr. Dan Seedah

The incoming president, Dr. Dan Seedah expressed his profound gratitude to Hon. Kwabena Aduomi and the delegation from Ghana for participating in the meeting. He also thanked all members who honored the invitation to attend the meeting. In his closing remarks, he urged the members to be fully involved in the activities of the organization and contribute the little they can to help the group achieve its goals in the coming years. Finally, he shared the goals of GTPF-NA for 2018 as listed below:

- i. First Ghana Infrastructure Conference (August 5th to 8th, Accra Ghana)
- ii. Development of the Ghana Transportation Planning Manual
- iii. Collaboration with the Ghana Highway Authority and Department of Urban Roads for the compilation of available data-sets for transportation planning and research purposes
- iv. Professional development of members through quarterly webinars

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm

ATTENDANCE LIST

#	Name*
1	Abraham Yarney
2	Adam Gatiba
3	Adjo Amekudzi-Kennedy
4	Akua Sakyibea Vander-Pallen
5	Alex Adu-Osei
6	Alexander Appea
7	Angela Biney
8	Augustine Marfo Agyemang
9	Bismark Agbelie
10	Collins Boadu Donkor
11	Cornelius Nuworsoo
12	Dan Seedah
13	Daniel Badoe
14	Edmund Okerchiri
15	Eugene A. Amarah
16	Godwin Badu-Marfo
17	James Amoo-Gottfried
18	Janis Asare
19	John Riverson
20	Jojo France-Mensah
21	Julius Codjoe
22	Kenneth A. Tutu
23	Kobina Gaituah
24	Kofi Acheampong
25	Kofi Adanu
26	Kwabena Bempong
27	Kwabena Owusu-Aduomi
28	Kwaku Boakye
29	Kwaku Boampong
30	Kweku Brown
31	M. Akofio Sowah
32	Magnus Lincoln Quarshie
33	Mamaa Kuukua Grant Monney
34	Marian Ankomah
35	Matthew Okrah
36	Milhan Moomen
37	Mussah Abdul Rashid
38	Naa Alabi
39	Paul Doku
40	Richard Atta Boateng
41	Richard Boadi
42	Richard Twumasi-Boakye

43	Sam Labi
44	Sam Owusu Ababio
45	Sitsofe David Addo
46	Stephanie Amoaning-Yankson
47	Sylvester Inkoom
48	Yaa Amanua Osafo
49	Yaw Adu-Gyamfi

**Some names are missing from the list.*