

Partnering with Third Parties

There is an old expression related to dispute resolution. "People do not argue with that which they help to create." Involving third parties through a "Specialty Partnering Session" can be crucial to your team's successful outcome.

Calling a Specialty Partnering Session

Step One: Fill the empty chairs

The success of any negotiation starts with making sure the right people show up. In other words, make sure to invite key decision-makers to a specialized meeting focused on the issue. To use the I-238 Widening and Rehabilitation project team (full story on page 3 and 4) as an example, they discovered that the falsework for the Kent Street Bridges crossing over Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) tracks would not work as designed. This was a design-bid-build job, so they needed to gather representatives from Caltrans Construction, Caltrans Structures, Caltrans Design, Flatiron (the Contractor) and BART Design in order to come up with a working alternative.

Step Two: Use the schedule to guide the team

Redesigning bridge falsework is a technical problem that construction teams deal with all the time. That being said, it takes time to get key people in a room together and even more time to get a new design approved. Make sure to identify when the design problem will begin affecting the critical path of the project. This way, the team can prioritize the process around delivery dates and make commitments to a) develop design options, b) develop delivery dates and c) implement the new solution. Teams typically have a short window of time to insert a technical solution before it starts affecting the project schedule, so it is important to keep this in mind!

Step Three: Call the Specialty Partnering Session

When your team needs to resolve a technical issue and you need buy-in and commitment, you cannot just squeeze it into the agenda of your weekly project meeting. Call a Specialty Partnering Session (or a series of sessions) and personally invite your third party stakeholders to attend. If the I-238 project team tried to design the new falsework without representatives from Caltrans Structures, Caltrans Design and BART Design in the same room, the team would have added months to the project. Getting everyone in the room to co-create a solution ensures that people won't argue with what is created and approval will happen much more quickly.

Step Four: Finalize the negotiation

A best practice is to focus on the "best technical solution" first. Only after the technical solution is resolved, should the team focus on the money. By separating the technical solution from dollars, your team can co-create the best and most economical solution and not muddy the waters by trying to negotiate the entire solution in a single sitting. This tends to bog down the process and rarely leads to the most elegant answer.

So how did the I-238 Widening and Rehab team resolve the issue?



The I-238 team designed a falsework cover that integrated into the bridge girders themselves and the contractor re-sequenced the work. This new design not only protected the BART tracks and allowed enough vertical clearance, but also had a number of advantages:

1. By pre-assembling the girders on the ground (rather than over the tracks two stories up), the work was safer
2. This design took less "track-time" to construct and remove, which minimized impact to BART operations
3. The pre-assembled girders required a more heavy-duty crane pick, but increased overall project efficiency, netting the project \$150,000 in savings.

For a more in-depth explanation, see the full Kent Bridge story on the following pages. The case study is an "Ah! Moment," part of the PI Horizontal Construction Committee's effort to identify key lessons learned to share with the industry.

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Success Stories

IPI Presents . . . **AHA!** Moments—Project Success Stories from the Trenches

I-238 WIDENING & REHABILITATION

FAST FACTS

- Budget:** \$106,000,000
- Schedule:** After 6-month delay, finished 4 months early
- Claims:** None
- Owner:** Caltrans / Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) / Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC)
- Contractor:** Flatiron West, Inc.
- Facilitator:** Pinnacle Leadership Group, Inc.
- Location:** Hayward, California

PARTNERING BEST PRACTICES

- Conducted kick-off and follow-up Partnering sessions with professional facilitator
- Monthly surveys throughout project
- Held issue-specific partnering meetings (like in the case of the Kent St. Bridge)
- Executive Commitment
- Engaged key stakeholders in Partnering
 - Funders (ACTC/BATA)
 - Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)
 - United Pacific Railroad (UPRR)
- Used Dispute Review Ladder and DRB Process to finish job with zero claims!
- Saved more than \$1 million through Value Engineering Change Proposals (VECP's) and \$150,000 through the Kent Bridge Suspended Covers solution



THE I-238 KENT BRIDGE “SUSPENDED COVERS”

When one crane pick is better than two...

By all accounts, the I-238 Widening & Rehabilitation was a challenging and sensitive job. In 2006, the first year of construction, the Project Team fell behind schedule by six months. Fortunately, ongoing commitment to Partnering meant that by 2008, when questions arose in regards to Kent Bridge, the Project Team had a foundation of trust and felt comfortable working together.

Caltrans, Flatiron, and BART engineers realized that a typical falsework design would not work over BART tracks running beneath Kent Bridge. Traditionally, work crews would use a falsework design and build a protective cover to surround the tracks, to safely protect trains as construction continued overhead.

In response, Caltrans halted the falsework design and the conducted a **dedicated brainstorming process including BART and Flatiron engineers!** It would have been easy for each stakeholder to begin positioning themselves for claims. However, by sponsoring a dedicated, facilitated meeting focusing on this issue, Caltrans enabled BART and Flatiron to share their respective concerns and engineer a new design that maximized efficiency and increased safety for both workers and the commuting public.

The goal of the session was to design a cover integrated onto the girders themselves that could protect the BART tracks and allow trains to comfortably run beneath. And, ultimately, the integrated team of engineers came up with an elegant, win-win solution!

“Partnering takes the stress away. When you can go into situations and know that if you just bring good solutions to the table, then you don’t have to posture and you don’t have to figure out how you are going to work your [claim] positions.”

—Robert Ferrouge, Flatiron Project Manager

Success Stories

“SUSPENDED COVERS” CONTINUED

Rather than build the falsework box around the tracks, Flatiron re-sequenced operations and performed the heavy girder assembly and deck pan installation on the ground. They then hoisted the pre-assembled units into place, dramatically reducing the amount of work conducted over the tracks. For the remaining work over the tracks, crews used platforms suspended between the pairs of pre-assembled girders.

This pre-assembled “suspended cover” design had multiple advantages: (1) By pre-assembling the girders and the protective cover on the ground (rather than two stories up) worker safety was increased significantly, (2) This design took less “track-time” to construct and remove than the original independent falsework design, significantly minimizing impact to BART operations (3) Though the pre-assembled girder design now required massive and much more expensive crane picks, it increased efficiency of the overall operation, netting a \$150,000 reduction in cost!

The I-238 Kent Bridge protective cover design was an elegant solution to a difficult set of circumstances. In this case, engineers from Caltrans, Flatiron and BART teamed up to think “out of the box”. By working together, the team ensured all safety concerns were met and the entire team could present the solution to stakeholders with a unified voice.

AWARD-WINNING TEAM

The I-238 Widening and Rehabilitation Project Team received the **IPI 2011 Partnered Project of the Year – Diamond Level Award** for its high level of Partnering in spite of difficult circumstances. The job started 6 months behind schedule and suffered many challenges along the way. However, through aggressive scheduling and high levels of Partnering, the job finished four months early—in time to help with the unexpected San Francisco Bay Bridge closures in October 2009.



Kent Bridge pre-assembled girders suspended by crane pick (Photo – Flatiron West, Inc.)

Five Tips for Project Issue Resolution

1. **Call First!** Do not surprise your partner by sending Friday night emails – speak to them in person or pick up the phone
2. **Expedite Solutions!** Project teams have a limited time to insert a technical solution before the issue will impact the schedule... make sure to keep that in mind.
3. **Specialize!** When your team is stuck on an issue, call a special meeting to negotiate a meaningful solution.
4. **Co-define the Problem!** When you attend the meeting – jointly define the problem – when all parties agree to the underlying issue, resolution is much easier.
5. **Come Prepared!** Make sure all parties have time to prepare and are able to negotiate on behalf of their company.



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