

Construction Management-For-Fee

BOSWELL ENGINEERING'S MISSION IS PROTECTING THE PUBLIC PURSE

Being guardian of the interests of taxpayers on a public construction project is a lot different than looking out for the interests of a contractor on a design-build project, says Stephen T. Boswell, president of Boswell Engineering. That's why his firm prefers construction management-for-fee assignments.

The 76-year-old South Hackensack, N.J.-based design firm developed its public-interest bent from its roots in municipal engineering. From them also has sprung a diversified firm involved in underwater, environmental, transportation, mechanical and electrical design as well as CM.

"Our firm grew up as a municipal engineering firm and as towns needed services, we added capabilities," says Boswell, the third generation of family leadership. The firm was started in 1924 by his grandfather, David C. Boswell. "Probably ahead of his time, he recognized the importance of privatization as an important component of public services," says



FAMILY AFFAIR Howard L. Boswell Sr. (middle) took over from father, David C. Son Steve (right) now leads firm.

Steve Boswell. This way, a town could have professional capability and not have the expense of keeping employees when they are idle. The firm now has 245 employees and is ranked 298 among ENR's Top 500 Design firms, with 1999 revenue of \$23.3 million.

CM-for-fee work is part of the firm's bread and butter, with the \$13.3 million in revenue placing the firm 59th among the Top 100 CM-for-fee firms. "We believe it is the natural extension of all project delivery systems," says Boswell. In design-

bid build, we are protecting the owner in design and construction."

On 70% of its contracts, Boswell acts both as designer and as agent of the owner during construction to make sure that the project is built to plans and specifications, payment is made for appropriate quantities and quality is up to snuff.

Some owners separate those functions, especially on larger contracts. As a result, the dual-role contracts account for only 30% of revenue.

Design-build is not in high favor at Boswell, although it has used the project delivery method for about eight bridges. "In those cases, we

picked the contractor," says Boswell. "It is an issue of ethics and loyalty...We are more comfortable answering to taxpayers than to a contractor," because of the latter's emphasis on low-cost construction and reluctance to consider long-term operating costs.

Boswell biggest CM job currently is on the \$42-million Hutchinson Parkway rehabilitation and realignment project in Westchester County, New York. With completion expected in 2001, the project includes asphalt pavement, walls, signals traffic and bridges. "The biggest challenge is maintenance and protection of traffic," says Boswell.

New York separates design and CM firms. Boswell "is consistently selected because they are the most qualified firm, largely because of their ability to maintain a core staff of exceptional caliber," says Michael P. Anderson, regional construction engineer in the New York Dept. of Transportation's Hudson Valley Region. "We have had some venerable firms give us a stinker." At one point, Boswell had 41 inspectors on 30 DOT projects in the region.

New Jersey's Bergen County, another Boswell client, allows design firms to perform both functions on its road projects. "We never had CM [contracts] until six or seven years ago when the county slowed down on hiring," says Ed Ranuska, county engineer. Boswell "has an able staff" and recently completed several road improvement projects, he says.

Boswell also provided CM services on the acclaimed \$120-million Route 4 and 17 highway interchange in Paramus, N.J. Completed last fall, the construction team shaved two years off the original three-year schedule. □

By William G. Krizan



IN CLOVER Route 4 and 17 interchange project set standard for project delivery.