

W. Hibbett Neel, P.E.



W. Hibbett Neel has served as a traffic engineer, company leader, and ITE ambassador for more than 50 years. The recipient of ITE's Burton W. Marsh

Distinguished Service Award in 2011, Hibbett is a past International President of ITE and was a co-founder and the first President of the ITE Deep South Division. Hibbett held ITE leadership positions for decades, culminating with his service as International President in 2014. He won the Deep South Section Outstanding Service Award in 2000, the Southern District Herman J. Hoose Distinguished Service Award in 1997, and the Southern Section Marble J. Hensley Individual Activity Award in 1979.

Born in Murfreesboro, TN, USA in 1941, Hibbett learned the value of hard work at an early age, rising before daylight as an 11-year-old fifth-grader to complete a morning paper route, and then by earning the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout from the Boy Scouts of America.

He earned a bachelor of engineering from Vanderbilt University in 1963 and a master of science in civil engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology in 1965. After serving three years in the U.S. Army (1965–67), where he attained the rank of Captain while serving as a Company Commander in Europe for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Hibbett joined the Tennessee State Highway Department as an Assistant Traffic Engineer in 1968.

In 1971, Hibbett went to work for Hensley-Schmidt, Inc., as a project engineer in the firm's Atlanta office. From 1972–1974, he managed the West Georgia Limited Access Highway Feasibility Study, an envisioned toll road from Chattanooga, TN, USA to Tallahassee, FL, USA. In 1974, he was named a vice president with

the firm, and was transferred to Jackson, MS, USA, where he helped develop a new Hensley-Schmidt branch office. Hibbett thrived in his new environment, developing and managing a variety of transportation engineering projects that included roadway design, traffic operations and safety, transportation and transit planning, and traffic signal systems. It was also during this period that Hibbett and his wife Susan decided that after moving six times in five years for his job they would make Jackson their home.

In 1983, seeking a new challenge, Hibbett and Gorman Schaffer co-founded Neel-Schaffer, Inc., a multi-disciplined engineering, planning, and construction management firm that has grown from one office in downtown Jackson to become one of the largest private, employee-owned engineering firms in the South, with more than 500 employees working out of 38 offices across nine states. Hibbett has served as Neel-Schaffer's President and CEO since the firm opened, in charge of strategic planning and the direction of the firm's activities. He develops and helps to find funding for project implementation, and he is committed to ensuring that each employee has the opportunity to reach his or her professional potential.

In addition to his involvement with ITE, Hibbett is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Council of Engineering Companies, the Transportation Research Board, and the American Public Works Association.

Other service and industry awards Hibbett has won include:

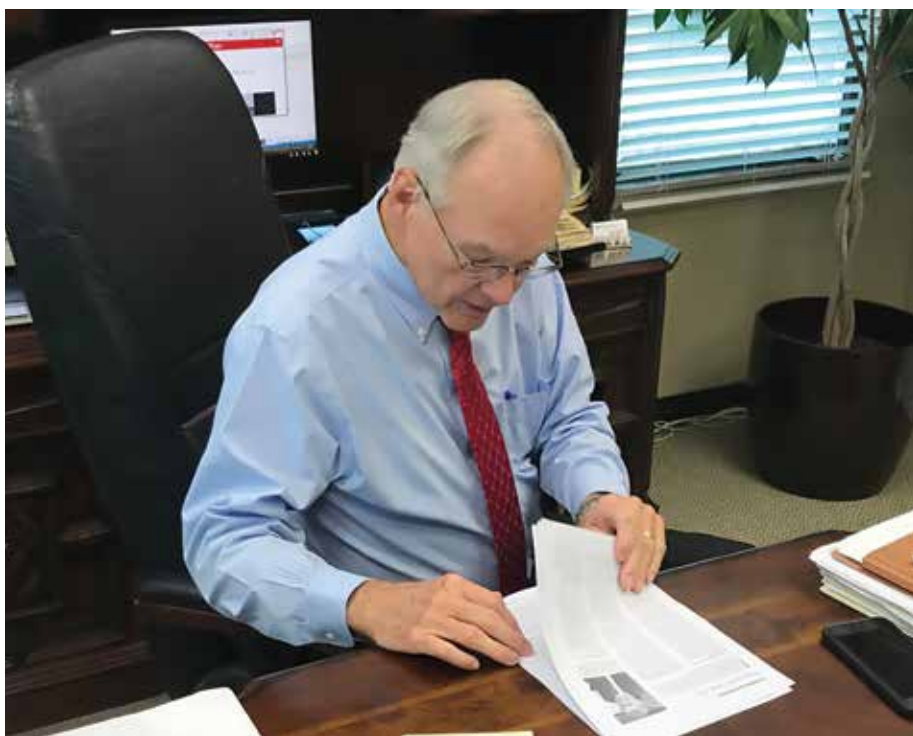
- Goodwill Industries Volunteer Service Award (2014)
- Jackson 2000 Friendship Ball Honoree (2013)
- ACEC Teddy Roosevelt Award (2012)
- Pat Yarborough Community Service Award from the Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership (2010)

- Vanderbilt University School of Engineering Distinguished Alumnus Award (2010)
- ACEC Community Services Award (2007)
- ASCE Diversity Champions Award (2005)
- APWA Mississippi Chapter Private Sector Member of the Year (2000)

Hibbett is community and civic minded, serving on more than a dozen committees and associations through the years, including the Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership, the Keep Jackson Beautiful Committee, the Mississippi Economic Council, the Advisory Committee for Jackson State University's School of Engineering, Mississippi Blood Services, and Jackson 2000, an organization committed to racial reconciliation.

ITE JOURNAL: What inspired you to pursue a career in transportation engineering?

HIBBETT NEEL: During my high school Latin class I was fascinated by the Romans and the Coliseum—the things they built that have lasted so long. And I wrote a paper about the Seattle Space Needle. I was just always interested in how things were built and how they operate, so as I was finishing my engineering studies at Vanderbilt and Georgia Tech it made sense to get involved in traffic engineering and transportation planning. My first job, for Marble Hensley, who was my mentor, was a traffic signal inventory in North Carolina. I was so impressed by the traffic engineer there, Pat Rose, who seemed to know everything about traffic signals. Later, I had the opportunity to manage the New Orleans TOPICs study—a traffic engineering project looking at all aspects of traffic safety and operations in New Orleans. The New Orleans TOPICs study



was the defining project of my early career. After these early exposures to the transportation profession, I knew what career I wanted.

ITEJ: How did you grow your business from one office to 38 offices and 500 employees?

HN: We started Neel-Schaffer with 20 employees and focused primarily on traffic engineering in Jackson. But it soon became apparent that to grow, we needed to be a multi-disciplined, multi-office firm, and an employee-owned firm. We developed an office in Nashville, TN, USA and from that base we developed work throughout Tennessee, especially the Tennessee State Highway Department. And although we grew as a multi-disciplined firm, a majority of our contracts were in transportation engineering and planning. We never lost that base discipline. As federal mandates and local priorities emerged, we established offices to provide services to clients throughout the Southeast. But you have to have more

than office locations to succeed. We brought on engineers with an entrepreneurial spirit, and put them in positions where they could excel.

ITEJ: You have been a champion for transportation advocacy. Why have you felt it important to invest so much of your personal time to working with elected officials on transportation issues?

HN: Our most successful professionals are those who love their work and are excited to explain what they do and the value of what they do to elected officials and policymakers. I was always inspired by people such as Herman Hoose in Charlotte and John Exnicios in New Orleans and Marble Hensley, all Honorary Members of ITE. And having chaired our ITE ethics task force, I realize how important it is that everything we do has to be in the public's best interest. For me, advocacy is educating public officials about the right thing to do for their communities. An example was working

to help the city of Jackson, MS, USA pass its one-cent sales tax referendum. Having worked with the city and being part of the community and living in Jackson for so long, and being committed to serve the city, it had become increasingly apparent that there were such limited funds available, particularly for water and sewer and street repair, that it was a crisis that would affect the city's economic viability. So I volunteered to help educate the community by going with the mayor to community meetings, and I'm proud that this one-cent sales tax passed by 90 percent. I'm very proud that during my ITE presidency we established an advocacy committee that is very active, and is doing a good job of promoting our advocacy initiatives.

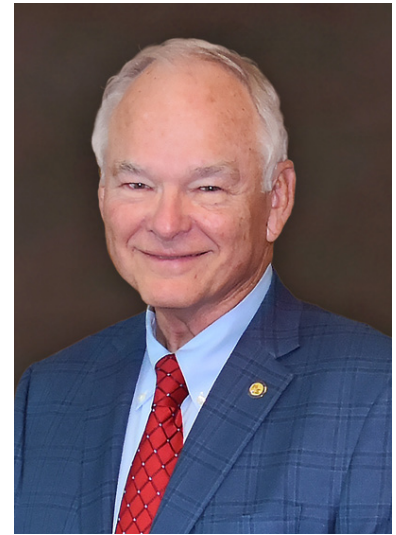
ITEJ: What advice do you have for professionals just starting a career in transportation engineering, and is there anything else you would like to add?

HN: We must be committed to continuous improvement and take advantage of every educational opportunity, especially those offered by ITE. I would advise a new employee to work under a professional who will devote a good deal of time to mentoring and helping the young engineer gain experience. Join a firm or public organization that will support their involvement and professional development and be committed to them being able to reach their professional potential. Of course, I certainly hope that employer would support their involvement in ITE. I would like to add that I am honored to receive this award, but I know what little success I've achieved I would not have achieved without the great support of my wonderful wife Susan. We are celebrating our 50th anniversary this year on May 11, 2018. And we have had many talented, dedicated employees who have really made this company a success. itej

Hibbett Neel Earns Prestigious ITE Honor

JACKSON, Miss. (Jan. 2, 2018) – Neel-Schaffer co-founder and President W. Hibbett Neel, PE, was honored by the Institute of Transportation Engineers today when he was named an Honorary Member of the international organization.

Honorary Membership is the highest recognition of notable and outstanding professional achievement presented by ITE, which has 70,000 members worldwide. Hibbett has been a member of ITE for over 40 years and served as the ITE International President in 2014. Only 80 members have received Honorary Member status since 1933, when the first Honorary Member was chosen.



“I am honored to receive this award,” said Hibbett. “But I know what little success I’ve achieved I would not have achieved without the great support of my wonderful wife Susan. We are celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary this year on May 11, 2018. And we have had many talented, dedicated employees who have really made this company a success.”

Hibbett and Gorman Schaffer founded Neel-Schaffer in 1983, primarily as a traffic/transportation firm. The firm has grown from one office with 20 employees to 500-plus employees working out of 38 offices across nine states.

“As federal mandates and local priorities emerged, we established offices to provide services to clients throughout the Southeast,” explained Hibbett. “But you have to have more than office locations to succeed. We brought on engineers with an entrepreneurial spirit, and we put them in positions where they could excel.”

About Neel-Schaffer Inc.

Neel-Schaffer is a multi-disciplined engineering and planning firm with offices throughout the Southeast. Founded in 1983, the firm has more than 500 professional and technical employees, and in 2017 it was ranked 177th on *Engineering News-Record's* list of the nation's Top 500 Design Firms.

Contact Information

Rusty Hampton | rusty.hampton@neel-schaffer.com | 601-351-2727
Marketing Manager, Neel-Schaffer Inc.