

Saratoga Business Journal
December 2008

BY SUSAN E. CAMPBELL

GMB Engineers & Planners, Inc. is a transportation planning, traffic operations and design firm that is fairly new to Saratoga County. But it arrived just in time to provide practical transportation solutions as they community gears up for construction of the Luther Forest Technology Campus.

Chris Cate, senior project manager, moved to Malta from GMB's headquarters in Orlando, FL in January 2005 to start a branch office.

"One of the reasons for settling here was the possible AMD expansion and the work it would bring" said Cate.

Another reason was that Cate hails from New Hampshire, his wife from Loudenville, and they have always loved this area, he said.

Initially Cate telecommuted from home while he completed the projects he was working on for his Florida clientele.

Now there is a GMB office at 357 Milton Avenue in Ballston Spa and three employees on staff.

Some of Cate's recent projects include ongoing work for the City of Mechanicville and a traffic impact study for local businesses in Ballston Spa.

He is also sub-consulting for clients in Rutland, Vermont, and Ravena, New York, on several traffic data collection projects.

"Instead of competing with other engineering firms, GMB can help by adding a new perspective," Cate said.

GMB grew its business in the Orlando and Gainesville areas largely through sub-consulting

projects, according to Cate. The firm was started in 1999 and has 64 employees.

Cate said when he joined in 2003 he was the 12th hire. That year there was much need for traffic work and infrastructure updating as central Florida experienced a huge expansion.

"Transportation planning looks ahead 15 or 20 years," Cate said. "Our responsibility is to see what future needs will be by factoring in historical growth rate and program development in each community, such as a big box store or a manufacturer like AMD."

When Cate and his family arrived in Malta, the roundabouts at Northway Exit 12 were already near completion.

When asked to put his engineer's hat on and rate Malta's series of roundabouts, Cate said, "roundabouts are not a 100% scenario, but the vast majority of time they provide the best option."

Initial public perception may not always be positive, but roundabouts have been proven to be safer and reduce travel time, said Cate.

They are also greener. There is less pollution from vehicle emissions during idling at stoplights and no electric power is drawn to run the signals, Cate said.

For these reasons, he said engineers are encouraged to consider roundabouts for any intersection that is signaled or needs improvement.

Cate said that as the Tech Valley becomes more firmly established and businesses and support services grow in the area, GMB will be here to help support

the local community with any project involving traffic.

"When analyzing traffic coming in, there can be dissenting opinions," said Cate. "If so we will come up with remediation that makes all parties happy."

Cate said about half of GMB's projects are for the public sector and half for the private sector and the public it serves.

His goal is to get more involved in the community, take on more assignments in Saratoga County, and increase GMB's base of employees.

GMB performs policy planning, traffic impact studies, corridor evaluations, long range planning, financial assessments, feasibility planning, travel demand modeling, access management and due diligence studies. In addition, its traffic operation services provide for technical evaluations through the development of safe and efficient recommendations for signal systems, safety evaluations, intersection assessments, corridor progression analysis, before/after studies, neighborhood studies and traffic calming services.

GMB is recognized as both a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and a Minority Business Enterprise and bring experience and talent to upstate New York with these certifications.

Chris Cate can be reached at 885-5347. Visitors can log onto www.GMB.cc for more information.