

# The Next Segment for the American Segmental Bridge Institute

As William R. “Randy” Cox ends his term as executive director of the American Segmental Bridge Institute, he reflects on the organization’s accomplishments and future.

by Craig A. Shutt



During ASBI’s 2017 convention in New York, N.Y., Cox and other attendees toured the construction of the new segmental box girder approaches for the Bayonne Bridge, which spans the Kill Van Kull connecting Bayonne, N.J., with Staten Island, N.Y. All Photos: American Segmental Bridge Institute.

The American Segmental Bridge Institute (ASBI) will have a new leader this fall, as William R. “Randy” Cox hands the executive director reins to Gregg A. Freeby, P.E. Freeby previously worked for 31 years with the Bridge Division of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and was appointed division director and state bridge engineer in October 2011. Freeby left TxDOT at the end of August 2018 and begins with ASBI in October, providing a transition period before Cox leaves on December 31.

## Cox’s Time at ASBI

Like Freeby, Cox worked for TxDOT before becoming executive director of ASBI. While with TxDOT, Cox led a team doing structural inspections in 1983 for the Bear Creek Bridge, which became the prototype for the San Antonio, Tex., “Y” segmental bridge project. He also provided construction-engineering support for several segmental and cable-stay projects and participated in a concrete segmental bridge durability-scanning tour of Europe sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration.

His ASBI tenure began on November 1, 2008, when he succeeded Cliff Freyermuth. Cox established a new office in Buda, Tex., just north of Austin, from which Freeby will continue to lead ASBI.

“The job [of executive director] piqued my interest, and I knew the window to take the position would probably not open again for some time,” Cox says. “I’ve always had a strong interest in segmental bridges, both design and construction. Post-tensioned concrete was one of my favorite areas, and I saw this [position] to be a great opportunity to advance that.”

TxDOT was the first owner-member of ASBI, and Cox had served as one of its representatives to the institute. Becoming the executive director of ASBI brought him back to those roots. “I was able to rekindle old friendships with a strong idea of the work the group did.”

Cox took over at ASBI just as the Great Recession hit, but the association—and the industry—weathered the storm. “There definitely was a drop in the number of bridges being built, but our membership grew, and we maintained our convention attendance in that period,” he reports. The organization’s strength

## The National Concrete Bridge Council

As he leaves ASBI, Cox also leaves his post as chair of the National Concrete Bridge Council (NCBC), with William Nickas of the Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute (PCI), and Editor-in-Chief of *ASPIRE*®, taking over.

Nine organizations, including the American Segmental Bridge Institute (ASBI), belong to NCBC. Their collective goal is to promote quality in concrete bridge construction through their own specialized focuses.

NCBC “is a great organization that allows members to discuss new techniques and issues and get everyone on the same page,” Cox explains. “We can share different perspectives to examine all impacts of ideas and contribute suggestions.” They also meet with Federal Highway Administration representatives to help resolve issues that arise.

“We look for ways to collaborate to ensure the best solutions and highest quality approaches,” Cox says. “I have no doubt that William will continue to move the group and the industry forward and keep NCBC programs moving smoothly.” For more information about NCBC, visit [nationalconcretebridge.org](http://nationalconcretebridge.org).

at this time “showed that the industry understood the value of networking and trading ideas.”

Cox is particularly proud that membership by corporations grew significantly during his tenure, from 50 companies in 2009 to 82 today. Corporate members “see the value that we can provide to them and find membership to be a strong investment.”



ASBI regularly offers a variety of training programs, such as this grouting verification class in 2014 in Austin. As part of its development of an update on grouting-certification training in 2016, ASBI created seven videos at the Florida Department of Transportation lab. The videos are available on ASBI's website and YouTube.

He also points to the number of owner-members today. When he arrived, only three state departments of transportation were members; today, 13 belong to ASBI. "We can gain the client's perspective and target our programs to serving each part of the industry better with their input."

For the organization's 25th anniversary in 2013, Cox and his team developed a strategic plan to guide growth and development for the next 25 years. ASBI reorganized its activities under five committees:

- Information Management, which collects, organizes, analyzes, and presents information relevant to segmental bridges
- Education, which encourages the use of technical knowledge and explains the

value of segmental bridges to increase their application

- Technology and Innovation, which is especially focused on sustainability, durability, environmental and public impacts, and asset management
- Communications, which is aimed at increasing awareness of ASBI and segmental bridges
- Membership, which seeks to broaden the base and partner with organizations that complement ASBI's goals, such as the National Concrete Bridge Council, which Cox also chaired until July of this year (see the sidebar)

These committees are prepared to collaborate with each other and other organizations to address key issues. For example, when concerns were raised

about chlorides appearing in grout in 2010 and soft-grout issues arose in 2012, ASBI "worked closely with the Post-Tensioning Institute [PTI] and others to develop new grouting specifications and incorporate new training techniques, and our new structure will help us respond to those issues," Cox notes. That work resulted in a comprehensive new specification for grouted post-tensioning installations that ASBI and PTI are working to make a uniform standard across states. "The lessons one state learns often can transfer, and we want to be part of the dissemination of those techniques," Cox says. Several iterations of the specification have been produced, each building on past experience.

Cox points to ASBI's outreach to students as another notable achievement during his time as executive director. "I'm proud to have begun the tradition of bringing students to our convention and introducing them to what segmental-bridge design is about," he says. "Not all will be intrigued, but some will be and want to learn more. I'm hoping we inspire some students to become the next generation of bridge engineers."

## Looking Forward

Cox has no specific plans for what he will do once he finishes the transition, but he is looking forward to new opportunities. "I want to begin the next chapter," he says. He expects his agenda will fill with activities involving his three granddaughters, and his field trips will involve museums rather than bridge sites.

"The hardest part of the decision [to step down as executive director] was knowing I would no longer see my industry colleagues and friends," Cox notes. "I enjoy discussing our challenges and catching up on new ideas and their lives. But there has to be a time to move on." Cox leaves ASBI feeling optimistic. He believes Freeby's tenure will bring innovative ideas to ASBI and help the organization continue making progress. "A fresh perspective will bring new energy, and I have no doubt that Gregg can take ASBI to the next level." Moreover, "I have every confidence that Gregg will continue to strengthen ASBI and work to educate, encourage, and inspire owners, designers, and contractors to innovate with concrete segmental bridges." 



Students attending the 2014 ASBI convention were able to tour the Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge (Q Bridge) in New Haven, Conn. The bridge was the first concrete segmental extradosed structure in the United States.