Chuck Prussack

Chairman's Message

PCI builds bridges

This issue of *PCI Journal* features bridges. I like bridges. OK, I confess I need to be a little more truthful here. I *really* like bridges and can get passionate about what our industry has done and is doing with bridges!

When I began working at Central Pre-Mix in 1979, we had an approach we called "instant bridges." The premise was that bridges could be built quickly using prefabricated components for both the substructure and superstructure.

At that time in my career, I was out selling, showing this concept to county engineers, the U.S. Forest Service, city engineers, and consultants. The audience was receptive because it met their needs for a long-term, low-maintenance bridge that could be built by less sophisticated contractors quickly. We sold thousands of these bridges over the years, and I'm pleased to say that nearly all are still performing well. If one was replaced, it was usually for a nonstructural reason, such as being too narrow for today's traffic.

Fast-forward to today. Now, with initiatives such as Accelerated Bridge Construction (ABC) and the Federal Highway Administration's Every Day Counts (EDC) initiative, once again, plant-cast, prefabricated precast concrete is being seen as the way to accelerate the process and have less of a negative impact on the traveling public.

The other part of this prefabrication piece that fits our industry well is that not only the superstructure but also the substructure can be made of prefabricated precast concrete components. This opens up additional opportunities for our industry to show what we do so well, bringing a precision manufacturing process to projects, shortening schedules, and lessening jobsite congestion. PCI certification assures the owner that these elements are being built to the same standards as the bridge girders.

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Prestressed concrete bridges went from zero market share in 1950 to being the predominant method of building bridges today! Areas of the country that have long histories of using other methods of bridge construction are now using prestressed concrete as they see what this type of product can do for them. Even types of bridges, such as curved or longer spans, that historically used other materials are being built with prestressed concrete using techniques such as splicing to achieve long spans or curved U beams to build curved bridges.

So with this issue of *PCI Journal*, let's celebrate precast/prestressed concrete bridges and see where our industry can help further and accelerate the bridge-building process!