



In Memoriam: John LaPlante



ITE recently learned of the passing of the following member. We recognize him for his contributions to ITE and the profession and send condolences to his family.

John N. LaPlante, P.E., PTOE (F) of Chicago, IL, USA, passed away on March 21, 2020 at the age of 80 from COVID-19, surrounded by family.

A Fellow and Life Member of ITE, John was a fixture at ITE Annual Meetings and technical conference throughout his 58 years of service to the organization. He was generous with both his time and his means, having regularly contributed to ITE's Legacy Fund, supporting students and younger members. He won the prestigious Theodore M. Matson Memorial award in 2020 for his advancement of the profession through outstanding contributions in the field of traffic engineering. After receiving his degrees from Illinois Institute of Technology and Northwestern University and a stint in the Air Force, John began working for Chicago as a traffic

engineer in 1965, and eventually served as the first commissioner of the Chicago Department of Transportation. "Mr. LaPlante was a 'municipally minded' Roseland native who cared deeply about his city and its government," according to his obituary in the [Chicago Sun-Times](#). "During his decades of city work, Mr. LaPlante notably helped 'straighten Lake Shore Drive's treacherous 'Z-Curve' and was a staunch advocate of bicycle lanes."

A pioneer in the area of complete streets and a well-know champion for pedestrian and bicycled safety, John is remembered by colleagues as working "tirelessly" on behalf of these causes before their importance was widely recognizes. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005 from the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP), for "his untiring energy and commitment to 'complete' streets that have resulted in great improvements to transportation policy and design," according to the organization. Noted as a "visionary" and "mentor" in professional circles, John was principal author of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Pedestrian Guide.

Upon his passing, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot issues the following statement: "John LaPlante's passing reminds us all of a turning point in the transportation life of our city. He was a passionate public service who helped bring CDOT to life nearly three decades ago. In the next phase of his career, he worked to extend Chicago's transportation legacy into the 21st century. While John may be gone, his impact in moving Chicago forward can be seen in the streets, sidewalks, alleys, and bike paths that line every corner of our city."

John was highly involved in many of ITE's Committees and Councils through the years, including the Roundabout Task Force; Complete Streets Council Executive Committee; Pedestrian and Bicycle Council Executive Committee; and the ITE Delegation to National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Prior to these modern committees, John served on the Career Guidance Committee; U.S. Legislative Committee; Bicycle Facility Planning Guidelines Committee; among many other past ITE groups.

He is survived by his wife Linda of 58 years; his daughter Leslie LaPlante and her husband Tim Decker; and two grandchildren, Elias and Sara.

As mentioned, John was a strong supporter of the ITE Legacy Fund and its younger member and student programs that help group the next generation of transportation professionals. [At the request, John's many friends within ITE, we have established the John LaPlante Memorial Donation as part of the ITE Legacy Fund.](#)