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## Association update: Design-build – continuing the industry trend

by Nate Pearson LEED AP, is preconstruction manager at Mortenson Construction

As we march into a new decade, it's the optimal time to take a look at where the construction industry's design-build project delivery method has been — and where it's going.

In the past 10 years, state governments passed either new or continuing legislation that enabled municipalities to increase the percentage of projects that use design-build, in some cases tripling the number of design-build projects undertaken in a given year. In fact, 2009 was a banner year in terms of pro-design-build legislation by the 50 state governments — 160 design-build-related bills were introduced nationwide, with 62 percent of them passing.

Minnesota's design-build evolution has paralleled the national trends. The state Legislature approved the design-build best value process in 2002. This year, the state will continue awarding design-build projects and is closing in on the \$1 billion mark since inception. The shift to design-build delivery is due in large part to a growing demand for fiscal transparency and fiduciary responsibility.

Design-build allows not only city, county and state governments but also private owners to effectively manage costs and increase speed of delivery — attributes that continue to be paramount as the country feels the lingering effects of the financial turmoil that marked the end of the previous decade. Indeed, in private and public sectors alike, construction project startups continue to be delayed by lack of project funding.

It is precisely because of these challenges that more and more owners and entities are recognizing the benefits of the design-build project delivery method. Procuring design and construction into one contract and establishing a single-source delivery method via design-build translates directly into improved cost control, a condensed and faster schedule, and minimized change orders — all of which save the owner time and money.

The continuing trend toward design-build is further manifested when taking a look at some of Minnesota's largest public projects slated for 2010: the Hastings Bridge replacement, the U.S. Highway 52 Elk Run Interchange, and Ramsey County's Minnesota Union Depot renovation project in St. Paul — all design-build projects.

The public and private sectors continue to lean on the design-build project delivery as a means to keep the construction industry streamlined. Looking forward, two key factors point to what will likely be the continued growth of the design-build approach throughout the next decade: additional legislation that will further expand design-build opportunities in government-funded construction projects, and a stabilizing economy that, coupled with the design-build project delivery method, will drive both private-sector confidence and construction starts.

By the way, the DBIA-Upper Midwest Region invites you to attend their next breakfast program, Wednesday, Jan. 20, at 7:30 a.m. at the Midland Hills Country Club in St. Paul. Registration information can be found at [www.dbia-um.org](http://www.dbia-um.org). The presentation will provide a look into the University of Minnesota's design-build Solar Decathlon.

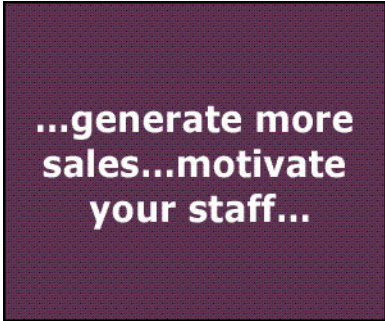
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