How We Design & Build

Our Process: Fast Track Design

A fast track construction project can be defined as a project where the time constraints of an owner to utilize a structure cause standard design and construction procedures and timelines to be compressed in order to meet the owner’s schedule for use of the structure. In a project of this type, time is of the essence, thus the need for time sensitive decisions is critical and takes precedence over other forces that would generally have greater weight in a standard design and construction sequence. In a fast track project processes that normally would run in sequence must be run in parallel. Therefore it is imperative that the process be fully mapped out prior to commencement. It is also vital that full cooperation and well defined lines of communication between owner, designers, consultants and contractor are established early in the process.

The advantage of a fast track project is the ability to meet shortened deadlines, which are becoming typical in today’s business environment. The disadvantage of a fast track project is that with the emphasis on time, budgetary considerations cannot always be fully analyzed due to time constraints and so some decisions must be made without being able to quantify the budgetary impacts of those decisions. Also, because the fast track process requires that decisions, once made, cannot be second guessed or reworked without significantly impacting the schedule, which of course is the main thrust of a fast track project, the ability to redesign, is limited if the fast track deadline is to be accomplished. Lastly, it is not uncommon for a fast track project to commence without the final budget being fixed. While there are ways to compensate for this, an owner when making the decision to use a fast track process must be aware that the budget may have a greater swing than a standard construction project.

One issue with a fast track project that cannot be controlled is that of governmental regulations, review, and approvals. While the team members will communicate early and as needed with those governmental entities that will ultimately have to approve the project, the ability for the contractor’s team to compress the review and approval process is extremely limited. Thus the schedule could be impacted negatively if approvals are not forthcoming as anticipated within the schedule.

The key to a successful fast track process is a commitment by the entire team to the duties and schedules established at the outset, as well as flexibility and good communication between all parties. A way to think about a fast track process is to imagine a large pool of water with a release valve at the top of a hill. If you take your time to construct a clear straight channel for the water to flow down, once you release the water, it will flow fast and straight unimpeded to the bottom of the hill. As soon as that steam is impeded, the water gets diverted and the path to the bottom of the hill is slower and more convoluted. The project is the pool of water and our plan is the channel. If we follow the plan, the project will flow, if we miss deadlines, make changes after cutoff dates, hit unexpected delays from weather or municipal forces, the project will not flow as well or as quickly as it could without these blockages. With this in mind, we now offer the following brief definition of responsibilities:

**Responsibilities of Owner**

1. Have a well thought out program of requirements
2. Be able to make immediate design decisions
3. No changes after decisions have been made
4. Clear chain of command for Contractor communication
5. Engage owner subcontractors, and vendors early with their commitment to meet established deadlines.

**Responsibilities of Contractor**

1. Schedule design meetings according to phase of construction.
2. Pre-set team meetings scheduled up front for the entire project.
3. Enforce terms of schedule – if deadlines are missed in this process, this will factor into current and future progress, and will impede onsite activities.
4. Enforce terms of Contract for all involved
5. Manage construction activities onsite relative to scopes of work under Contractor’s purview.
6. Pricing of design items relative to phase of construction under way at any particular time.
7. Clearly define communication chain with designated people in position to facilitate timely decisions.