

# Husam Musharbash



just don't have the necessary traffic engineering knowledge needed to design an effective traffic management system that will produce the results the road authority is looking for. In short, knowing how to connect the wires, being an electrical mechanical contractor, is not the only requirement. Traffic engineering knowledge is a must, and in many cases, it is lacking.

The second point I would like to stress is that I am a strong supporter of a design-build approach for ITS projects, rather than design-bid-build, where sub-systems are specified and imposed. It's often the case in this type of process that there are conflicts that need time and effort to overcome or they cannot be integrated fully.

In design-build, if the consultant concentrates on putting together a good functional specification for the system – in essence the end result and how it will work - then system integrators like us can select the latest technologies and products and make sure they work together. Not only that, in our experience, such an approach reduces costs and also the time to implement the system.

**In terms of selecting the right products, Traffic Tech's business seems to be founded on partnerships with a wide range of OEMs from around the world.**

Certainly, our partnerships with OEMs are extremely important to our growing business and will continue to be. We very carefully pick and choose our suppliers to be the best in the market and we have a policy of never promoting or using a product unless we have fully tested it ourselves to make sure it is suitable for the Middle East. To give you an example, there are dozens of detectors of all kinds on the market. And it's often the case that a specific product or technology might work well in one application, but not be the appropriate product for another project.

That underlines what I said at the beginning: the success of any ITS project is not just getting good products or technology and integrating them into a system; it's about having local support and expertise from concept through to operation. That's why, of the 400 people we employ, over 60 are engineers who are experts in different fields related to traffic management and ITS. And going forward, that expert resource is constantly being added to. ■  
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## Local knowledge

Husam Musharbash, president & CEO, Traffic Tech Group, on why local expertise is crucial for successful ITS and traffic management projects

**As someone with over 20 years involvement in the traffic industry in the Middle East, how do you assess the growth of ITS in recent years?**

In general, things moved quite slowly for a long time but, from about six or seven years ago, momentum began to build and that is still growing. There are some good initiatives from a few roads authorities, particularly within the GCC, where they are trying to approach ITS in a logical and systematic way; starting with well-researched ITS architecture, working on developing local standards, and gradually building home grown expertise in the field. And I think that is the most important part of what has been happening lately. Equally important, the message is finally getting across that ITS is not a product that you buy and install – it is a process.

**What do you mean by process?**

Obviously, you have to choose the right products and technologies and the system integration has to be done properly, but, as traffic changes, as cities grow, these systems have to be continually fine-tuned and developed further to meet changing needs. You need the people in place, actually on the ground, for this to happen. There is no substitute for that. Simply putting a system in place without having these capabilities will not work for long; problems will inevitably arise and have to be dealt with in real time.

And, in too many cases, that often doesn't happen in the Middle East. A lot of manufacturers are not putting enough effort into developing expertise within the region either with their distributors or with the clients themselves.

**Do you see any other negatives within the ITS industry in this region?**

I think there are two aspects that need to change. For instance, the ITS market has too often been dealt with largely through major electrical and mechanical contractors who are not specialists in traffic systems. Because it's not their core business, they