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### Fisher & Arnold adds Fla. link -- Five-person firm in Chipley specializes in transportation engineering

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Memphis-based **Fisher & Arnold** has expanded its presence into Florida - a market with great growth potential for engineering firms - by acquiring the five-person Transpro Group.

The firm, based in Chipley, Fla., specializes in transportation engineering, which fits the type of work **Fisher & Arnold**, a full-service engineering and architectural firm, was looking to do in the state.

"It seemed to be a really good market that we wanted to be a part of," company president and co-founder Bob **Fisher** said.

Florida is an area greatly underserved by engineering firms, according to Hugh Hochberg, a partner in The Coxe Group, a Seattle-based management consulting firm for professional services.

Coxe did a study of the area for one of its clients and discovered Florida has great market growth potential.

"So it's understandable that firms would look to acquire there," Hochberg said.

Mergers and acquisitions are popular methods for entering a new market, he said. They provide firms an established office, usually with an established reputation, and firms often believe that this route is the most cost efficient.

**Fisher** said Transpro's reputation is part of the reason it was interested in the firm, as was the extensive work it has done for the Florida Department of Transportation.

Transpro will continue to operate under its established name for the foreseeable future, although it will be noted that it is a division of **Fisher & Arnold**, **Fisher** said.

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"They have a name that is recognized in the area, and they have an excellent reputation and we plan to build on that."

**Fisher & Arnold** began its relationship with Transpro about three years ago, partnering with the company to pursue projects in Florida.

The two firms became comfortable with each other, and the management of both groups believed an acquisition would be beneficial.

Transpro will be able to offer a much broader range of services by using the expertise of **Fisher & Arnold**, Transpro founder Gerald Vickery said. He continues as the Florida office's manager. Chipley is northeast of Destin, near Interstate 10 .

"With the ability to offer services to a more diverse group of clients, we envision some long-term growth for the Chipley office," he said.

**Fisher & Arnold**, which has more than 100 employees, also operates offices in Nashville and Meridian, Miss.

- Maria Burnham: 529-2320

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