



Transportation Mini-Series

September 24, 2026

Event Information:

Topics:

- » ConneCTed Conversations: Connecting Transportation Professionals Across New England
- » ConneCTing through Innovative Project Solutions
- » ConneCTing through the Industry
- » ConneCTing with our State and Municipal Partners
- » ConneCTing with our Community through Hands-On Demonstrations
- » ConneCTing with Regional Leadership: Shaping the Future of Transportation

Date & Time:

Thursday, September 24, 2026

8:00 am - 5:30 pm

Location:

Double Tree Hilton Hotel
42 Century Drive
Bristol, Connecticut 06010



Event Moderator:

Kristen Anderson Levesque

CTDOT, WTS CT Co-Chair Events Committee

Morning Plenary Session

Connected Conversations: *Connecting Transportation Professionals Across New England*

The 20th Annual WTS-CT Transportation Mini-Series Conference will open with a dynamic, talk-show-style plenary conversation focused on Leadership, Mentorship, and Sponsorship and the role each plays in strengthening the transportation industry.

The session will bring together experienced Northeast regional and CT-based transportation leaders for an engaging conversation about how leadership creates direction and opportunities, how mentorship provides knowledge, guidance, and support, and how sponsorship goes a step further by actively advocating for others and opening doors to new opportunities.

Through an interagency, interdepartmental, and intergenerational lens, the conversation will explore how professionals across different roles, disciplines, organizations, and career stages can work together to build stronger and more connected transportation communities.

Panelists will share perspectives and experiences on navigating career growth, developing talent, building meaningful professional relationships, and creating sponsored opportunities for others to succeed.

Moderator:

- » Sofia Eva Clark, HDR , WTS CT Leadership Committee Member

Panelists:

- » Meredith Avery, VHB
- » Jill Cahoon, AECOM
- » Kim Lesay, HNTB
- » Josh Morgan, CTDOT
- » Rebecca Williamson, Jacobs



Moderator: Sofia Eva Clark, HDR

With over 20 years of experience in public involvement, community engagement, and stakeholder relations, Sofia is dedicated to building strong partnerships that support successful project delivery. She has extensive experience working with clients, public agencies, community organizations, and project stakeholders to foster collaboration, build consensus, and address project challenges. Sofia's detail-oriented and proactive approach enables her to develop effective engagement strategies that encourage meaningful participation and ensure stakeholder perspectives are incorporated into project planning and decision-making. She is committed to creating inclusive, transparent processes that build trust and lasting relationships within the communities she serves.



**Meredith Avery, Senior VP, New England
Regional Manager, VHB**

Meredith Avery is the New England Regional Manager at VHB, where she oversees multidisciplinary teams delivering consulting services in transportation, environmental planning, engineering, and sustainability. With more than 25 years of industry experience, Meredith provides strategic oversight across VHB's diverse regional portfolio, ensuring quality client relationships and expanding market presence. Meredith actively serves on professional boards, including the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions, and is committed to advancing diversity and inclusion. She holds a B.S. in Zoology from the University of New Hampshire and completed graduate studies at Tufts University.



Jill Cahoon, GISP, ENV-SP, Vice President at AECOM

Jill Cahoon leads AECOM's Transportation Planning team in New England and has worked in the industry for 26 years. Jill is a team builder who regularly collaborates with transportation planners and designers across the country identifying best practices and lessons learned, covering all transportation modes and focusing on coordination for the betterment of communities. Jill leads a team of 65 multimodal transportation planners and focuses on transit and safety initiatives that improve access to vital needs and opportunity. Jill is the Communications Chair for the New Hampshire Chapter of WTS and is active in WTS chapters across New England. She completed the WTSI Executive Level of the Signature Leadership Program in 2022 and is passionate about mentoring future leaders in the transportation industry.



**Kimberly Lesay – Practice Planning Consultant,
HNTB**

Kim Lesay is a Planning Practice Consultant at HNTB with more than 31 years of transportation experience. She previously served as the Bureau Chief of Policy and Planning and Assistant

Transportation Planning Director for Environmental Planning at the Connecticut Department of Transportation. At CTDOT, she advanced numerous initiatives, and consistently focused on bringing various disciplines, offices, bureaus, as well as State and federal agencies together to better communicate and collaborate. Kim is a recognized leader in the industry, she was named WTS Connecticut Woman of the Year in 2021 and is a graduate of the AASHTO Executive Institute. She holds a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from UConn, is a proud mother of two grown children and serves on the Advisory Board for the Connecticut Chapter of WTS.



Josh Morgan, Communications Director, CTDOT

Josh Morgan is the Communications Director for the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), where he leads the agency's external and internal communications, including its websites, social media, public involvement, and customer care call center.

Josh and the Communications Team translate highly technical transportation information into clear, jargon-free language and share it across the full range of channels people use to get information, from social media and traditional press to CTDOT's websites and digital platforms. This multi-channel approach, paired with partnerships with outside consultants and vendors that support the agency's work, helps ensure community members are up-to-date about the projects impacting their daily lives and have the information they need to stay safe on Connecticut's roadways.

Before joining CTDOT in 2022, Josh was the Communications Director for Norwalk, CT, the state's sixth-largest city. He has also worked in nonprofit marketing and communications and spent time as a print and broadcast journalist. Josh is a graduate of the University of Connecticut, where he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism. He is a native of Danbury, CT and currently lives with his family in Cheshire, CT.



Rebecca Williamson, PE

**Vice President, New England Transportation
Market Leader, Jacobs**

Rebecca (Becky) S. Williamson has over 35 years of experience in the transportation engineering industry. As the New England Transportation Market Leader, she works with the transportation discipline leaders to develop strategic growth and win plans for each transportation portfolio and helps to coordinate workload and pursuits throughout the Northeast. Over the years, Becky has developed strong client and industry relationships throughout New England. Becky's 30 plus years of experience in the transportation industry brings an extensive and varied background as a designer, project manager and principal-in-charge on multi-disciplined projects of all sizes. She is versed in all facets of transportation engineering and environmental permitting, has directed, and supervised all phases of design and construction, and provided senior leadership for multi-disciplined infrastructure projects. She graduated with distinction from Clarkson University with a B.S. in Civil and Environmental Engineering and is a Registered Professional Engineer in each of the New England States. She is a long-standing member of WTS participating in the WTS-Boston leadership team for several years, including serving as President and sitting on the WTS International Board. She is currently President for the American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts (ACEC/MA), participates on the ACEC/MA MassDOT Partnering Committee, and is an ACEC MA Political Action Committee (PAC) Champion.

Afternoon Plenary Session

ConneCTing with Regional Leadership:

Shaping the Future of Transportation

How should Connecticut plan and invest in transportation infrastructure when the way people work, travel, and move is changing? This forward-looking panel brings together representatives from Connecticut's Councils of Governments, the City of New Haven, CTDOT, and FHWA for a candid discussion about the future of transportation and infrastructure.

Panelists will explore the impact of AI and emerging technologies, changing travel patterns, aging infrastructure, federal funding, transit investment, regional mobility, and evolving approaches to project planning and delivery. The discussion will challenge traditional assumptions and consider how Connecticut can move beyond individual projects to create a more connected, resilient, and multimodal transportation system.

The conversation will ultimately ask: Are we building the transportation system we need for tomorrow or continuing to rebuild the system we inherited?

Moderator:

- » Shawna Bartkus, GM2

Panelists:

- » Jennifer Brady, PE, FHWA
- » Laoise King, Deputy Commissioner, CTDOT
- » Patrick Carleton, MetroCOG
- » Matt Hart, CRCOG
- » Haley Simpson, City of New Haven



Shawna Bartkus, GM2, Moderator

Shawna Bartkus is a Vice President and Director of Marketing at GM2 Associates, Inc., bringing more than 25 years of A/E/C industry experience. She leads the firm's marketing and business development efforts and has played a key role in securing major projects and expanding GM2 into new markets. As Vice President, Shawna works closely with GM2's leadership team to support strategic growth, strengthen internal processes, and advance the firm's culture. An active industry leader, Shawna is a former President of WTS Connecticut and has served on the State Board of the ACE Mentor Program of Connecticut. She established WTS Connecticut's Mentor and Scholarship Programs and helped launch its Transportation Mini-Series, now in its 20th year. Shawna's leadership mantra is simple: it's all about people. She believes strong relationships, collaboration, and investing in others are the foundation for successful projects, organizations, and careers.



Jennifer Brady, PE, FHWA

Jennifer is a Transportation Specialist with the Federal Highway Administration CT Division. She has over 25 years of experience in the fields of metropolitan planning, safety, traffic engineering, project management, and multi-modal transportation planning and is a licensed professional engineer in Connecticut. Her experience also includes work to advance Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act initiatives including competitive grants and resiliency planning. Prior to working for FHWA, Jennifer was the Office Leader for a civil engineering consulting firm and served as the Transportation Director for Connecticut's largest Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).



Laoise King, Deputy Commissioner, CTDOT

Laoise (pronounced Lee sha) King comes to the CTDOT with more than 20 years of experience in local government and not-for-profit organizations.

Most recently, Laoise served as Chief of Staff for the Mayor of Norwalk, CT. As Chief of Staff, Laoise managed all administrative functions for the City of Norwalk at the direction of the mayor. She also provided guidance to elected

officials on policy and planning as well as working closely with the City's State and Federal delegations to achieve the City's legislative agendas and secure funding for municipal projects.

Prior to coming to the City of Norwalk, Laoise served in various capacities in local government and non-profit sectors. She worked as Vice President of Education Initiatives at United Way of Greater New Haven where she was a member of the senior management team and was responsible for the design and management of community investments, partnerships and programs related to education. Before joining Unity Way, Laoise served the City of New Haven as Assistant Corporation Counsel, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor and finally as Chief of External Affairs for the New Haven Public Schools. Laoise also advised the Mayor on public policy matters, implemented Mayor's Office initiatives, and assisted the Chief of Staff in day-to-day operations of the City.

Born in Ireland, but raised in Connecticut, Laoise returned to Connecticut in 2005 after living in Colorado for ten years. In Colorado, Laoise worked as an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Denver. Laoise received her Juris Doctor from University of Denver College of Law and her B.A. degree from University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Laoise and her family love to travel - they have traveled to South America, Central America, Europe, and Africa, but her favorite place to go is to their lakeside cabin in Minnesota near where her husband grew up.



Patrick Carleton, AICP, Deputy Director, Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

Patrick Carleton is the Deputy Director for the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG). MetroCOG is the regional planning agency for the Greater Bridgeport Region, assisting member municipalities with transportation, transit, environmental, and regional planning, and regional economic development initiatives. As Deputy Director, Patrick helps oversee agency operations while directing and coordinating comprehensive and project specific planning for the Region and assisting with the implementation of shared services to better serve the municipalities, their staff and the residents of the region. He received a Master's of Public Administration from the University of New Haven and a Bachelors' Degree from the University of Connecticut.



Matt Hart, JD, MPA, Executive Director, CRCOG

Matt Hart began his tenure in 2022 as the Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), the largest of Connecticut's regional planning organizations serving 38 municipalities and a population of 976,248 in the greater Hartford region. The CRCOG region is well-situated between New York City and Boston, and is rich in diversity, history, and natural resources. CRCOG's team of professional staff work to promote responsible land use, sustainable transportation systems, economic vitality, and quality of life. The organization also advocates for its capital city and member towns and provides various shared services to facilitate governmental efficiency.

Matt is an accomplished manager and leader with broad experience in local government. He values open government, innovation, and teamwork, and has a passion for leadership and public service. Matt has championed regional solutions to improve service delivery and to promote equity and sustainability throughout his career.

Previously, Matt served as the Town Manager in West Hartford, Connecticut, where he helped lead the community through the COVID-19 pandemic. Matt also assisted the Town Council with supporting the town's business community, improving customer and constituent service, and developing sound fiscal strategies designed to address budgetary and operational needs.

Before West Hartford, Matt served as Town Manager in Mansfield, Connecticut, where he played a critical role in developing Storrs Center, a mixed-use, New Urbanism project located adjacent to the University of Connecticut's main campus. Matt began his local government career with the town of Windsor, Connecticut, where he had an opportunity to learn many progressive management practices and principles. In addition, Matt has experience working in the private sector and is a veteran of the US Army and US Army National Guard.

Matt is currently an adjunct faculty member with the University of Connecticut's Department of Public Policy, which has recognized him for his contributions to the field of public administration and the school. He is also an active member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), and the Connecticut Town and City Management Association (CTCMA).

Matt earned his Juris Doctor (JD) and Master's in Public Affairs (MPA) from the University of Connecticut, and his bachelor's degree in political science from the State University of New York at Potsdam.



Haley Simpson, Director of Transportation, Traffic and Parking, City of New Haven

Haley Simpson is the Director of Transportation, Traffic & Parking for the City of New Haven. In this role, she oversees transportation planning, traffic safety, parking operations and initiatives aimed at improving mobility throughout the city.

A New Haven native, Haley has built her career in public service and community development. Prior to her current role, she served as Deputy Chief of Staff to New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker and as a Project Manager with The Glendower Group, the development arm of Elm City Communities. Haley earned a Bachelor of Science in Public Health and a Master of Business Administration from Southern Connecticut State University. She is currently pursuing a Master of Public Administration at the University of Connecticut. Outside of her professional work, Haley remains active in civic and community organizations. Her work reflects a continued commitment to public service, leadership, and the New Haven community.