# Advancing women
# Advancing transportation
*Q3 2026*

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# PRESIDENTS COLUMN



## Dear WTS Members and Friends,

The leaves are changing, the days are getting shorter, and while some of you may be dreading the cold, I'm looking forward to slowing down and embracing the coziness of winter after a summer jam-packed with events.

Although things were a bit quieter on the WTS front the past few weeks, we've been hard at work making the organization the best it can be. I'm thrilled to share that at long last, we've launched our new ***Get Involved*** page. This makes it easy to learn about all of the opportunities to do more with WTS, from volunteering for a single event to joining the Board of Directors. Please share this with anyone who's expressed interest in WTS so they can see where they might want to plug in.

The inaugural ***WTS Transportation Summit*** is on Tuesday, Nov. 10, and it's not too late to join us! The summit will feature a keynote speaker as well as a candid panel discussion about what changes at the federal level mean for our region and how transportation leaders are charting a path forward. I hope this will provide some grounding in a time of significant uncertainty and establish an excellent foundation for future summits.

Our annual holiday party is also coming up fast and it tends to sell out, so ***register now***. As we prepare for the party, we're looking for items for the silent auction, which is a highlight of the event and raises funds for WTS scholarships. If you or your employer would like to donate an item, please reach out to Emma Verkuilen (emma.verkuilen@washingtoncountymn.gov) to share your interest; you can also request suggestions for items if you're not sure what to gift. This event is a highlight of the year, and I'm excited to celebrate our 2026 achievements with all of you.

Happy autumn,



**Alicia Valenti**
2026 WTS Minnesota President

# CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

**MN OFFICES:** Saint Paul, Brainerd, Saint Louis Park

**TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:** Transportation Planning, Traffic Engineering, Highway Design & Engineering, Multi-Modal Planning & Design, Bridge Design, Environmental Documentation and Field Investigation, Cultural Resources Right-of-Way Acquisition, Survey, Construction Administration.

**WHY KLJ SUPPORTS WTS MN:** Since the 1930s, KLJ has planned, designed, and supported infrastructure across the country such as roads, runways, pipelines, and parks. We create solutions that turn visions into reality and improve the lives of people and communities. We do this by focusing on a business model that puts the customer first. KLJ supports WTS and the mission of broadening opportunities for all and the active role the organization takes in promoting the advancement of women in transportation. The training and networking provided by WTS creates opportunities for our future engineers, planners, and other technical staff. These opportunities help determine the paths for our next generation of transportation professionals.

**MN OFFICES:** Minneapolis and Duluth

**TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:** Buildings & Structures, Intelligent Transportation Services (ITS), Traffic Engineering, Transportation Planning, Roadway Design, Right-of-Way, and Transit Planning

**WHY WSB SUPPORTS WTS MN:** WSB was founded on the understanding that culture drives results. As a firm, we are committed to building a more diverse workforce. The communities we serve are far more diverse than our industry and we want to be part of the solution. Whether it's through our Opportunity+ training program or Women's Networking Group, we believe in fostering an environment where all staff feel included and valued. We support organizations like WTS because of their commitment to advancing women in the transportation industry.




## Greetings from the 2026 WTS MN Board!

We're happy to serve our members to advance the inclusion & participation of women in the transportation industry! Our 2026 Board members are:

**President:**
Alicia Valenti, Metro Transit

**Vice President:**
Emily Goodell, Hennepin County

**Past President:**
Erin Jordan, SEH

**Treasurer:**
Kara Langford, SRF

**Secretary:**
Madeline Dahlheimer,
Washington County

**Development Director:**
Catherine Judd, HDR (interim)

**Membership Director:**
Erin Daly Davenport,
Alta Planning + Design

**Programs Co-Directors:**
Karen Scheffing, TKDA
Ella Rasp, Stantec

**Marketing Director:**
Rara Istifadah, Bolton & Menk

**Scholarships & Recognitions Director:**
Kaitlyn Denten,
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

**Diversity & Inclusion Co-Chairs:**
Joanne Cho, Stantec
Priyam Saxena, WSP

**Development Chair:**
Sylvie Guezeon,
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

**Membership Chair:**
Ian Girardeau, SRF

**Special Events Co-Chairs:**
Ellie (Yu) Tian, HDR
Greta Kurtz, Metro Transit

**Volunteer Coordinator:**
Emma Verkuilen, Washington County

**Mentoring Co-Chairs:**
Jamie Bents, WSP
Rory Talbot, HNTB

**Programs Co-Chairs:**
Zoey Mauck, Metropolitan Council
Margaret Donahoe,
MN Transportation Alliance

**Social Media Chair:**
Kate Hvizdos, Bolton & Menk

**Website Chair:**
Sara Allen, Washington County

**Transportation YOU Co-Chairs:**
Megan Danielson, Kimley-Horn
Mario Ratnaraj, HNTB

**Regional Board Representative:**
Morgan Abbott, Metro Transit

# PROGRAMS UPDATE

## June Program

### Quarterly Networking

We enjoyed a wonderful evening of networking, conversation, and music at our June 16 Happy Hour and Concert. It was great to spend time together in a relaxed setting and connect with members of our community beyond our usual events. It was particularly special as one of our own board members, Karen Scheffing, was performing!



## July Program

### MSES/NCITE Saints Game

WTS MN teamed up with MSES, NCITE, ITSMN, SAME, and MNSPE for the annual Industry Partners Saints Game Event at CHS Field on July 23rd. The evening brought together professionals from across the transportation, engineering, and construction industries for networking, food, and baseball as the St. Paul Saints took on the Columbus Clippers. The event provided a great opportunity to build connections and celebrate partnerships across Minnesota's infrastructure community in a fun way.




### Speaking to Influence: Public Speaking & Advocacy for Transportation and Planning Professionals with APA MN

We brought together more than 15 transportation and planning professionals for a morning of growth on July 27th. Tane Danger of Danger Boat Productions and Beth Plamondon from Toastmasters led attendees through practical approaches to public speaking, communication, and advocacy, with a focus on skills transportation and planning professionals can use throughout their careers.

The morning wasn't just about listening. Participants jumped into low-pressure, improv-based activities to practice communicating in real time and build confidence speaking in front of others. It was a fun and engaging way to step outside our comfort zones and strengthen skills that are valuable both in and outside the workplace.



# PROGRAMS UPDATE



## August Program

### Past President's Event

WTS MN brought together past presidents, members, and friends for a special evening of networking and connection at City House. The event provided an opportunity to reconnect with familiar faces, make new connections, and spend time with leaders who have helped shape WTS Minnesota throughout its 40+ year history.

It was a wonderful chance to celebrate the relationships and leadership that have strengthened the chapter over the years while continuing to build connections across the WTS MN community. Thank you to our past presidents and everyone who joined us for a memorable evening!




### Board Recruitment and Ice Cream Social

On August 12th, we brought together current and prospective volunteers to learn more about opportunities to get involved with the chapter. Attendees had the chance to sit in on a board meeting at SRF Consulting before transitioning to an informal ice cream social at Parkview Ice Cream Shop. The evening offered a welcoming way to connect with current board members, learn more about board and committee service, and explore opportunities to develop leadership skills while contributing to WTS Minnesota.

# PROGRAMS UPDATE

## September Program

### Quarterly Networking

Sometimes the best connections happen without a formal agenda! The September Quarterly Networking Event created a casual space for transportation professionals to gather, catch up, and meet new people. Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make it an energizing morning of networking!



### LGBTQIA+ Transportation Professionals & Allies Networking Event

Given our fantastic turnout earlier this year, WTS MN hosted a second meeting and return to A Bar of Their Own to continue providing space for connection of this growing community. We had a wonderful time connecting with each other, make new connections, and spend time with fellow transportation professionals and allies.



### Career Shadowing

What does a career in transportation actually look like? WTS Minnesota's Career Shadowing Day gave students and early-career professionals a chance to find out firsthand. Participants visited the WSP and Alliant offices, learned about the work each firm does, and learned from transportation professionals across a variety of fields.

It was a great day of learning, conversation, and connection, giving participants a closer look at potential career paths while creating opportunities to meet and learn directly from professionals in the industry. A big thank you to Alliant and WSP for opening their doors and helping introduce the next generation of transportation professionals to the many possibilities within the field!



# PROGRAMS UPDATE

## October Program

### Safety Action Panel

WTS MN brought transportation professionals together for a Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Panel focused on how local communities are using federal SS4A funding to advance roadway safety. Hosted at Kimley-Horn office, the panel featured perspectives from local cities that have leveraged the program to develop safety action plans for their communities.

The discussion offered attendees an opportunity to learn from communities navigating the SS4A process and hear about their experiences developing plans to address transportation safety. The program also provided time for networking and conversation among attendees interested in making streets safer across Minnesota. Thank you to everyone who came, we had a great turnout of around 30 people!






### Member Appreciation Event

We traded project plans for vision boards at WTS MN's Plotting Our Routes member appreciation event! Members gathered for an evening of collaging, conversation, and connection, creating vision boards that reflected where they've been, what keeps them grounded, and where they hope to go next.

With mocktails from WTS MN's own Hally Turner and Per Se, the evening gave us a chance to slow down, get creative, and connect beyond our job titles. Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make this members-only gathering such a fun way to celebrate the people who make up the WTS MN community!










# UPCOMING EVENTS

## *11.10*

**What:** WTS MN Transportation Summit - No Road Map: Leading Transportation in an Era of Federal Uncertainty
**Where:** Mosaic Venue (817 5th Ave S, Suite 300, Minneapolis, MN 55404)
**When:** November 10, 2026 from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM




Federal policy changes are reshaping the transportation landscape at an unprecedented pace. Funding commitments are shifting, grant programs are evolving, and long-standing priorities around climate, equity, and infrastructure investment are being reconsidered. How can agencies, communities, and industry partners continue advancing transportation goals amid this uncertainty? Join WTS Minnesota for a thought-provoking summit featuring keynote speaker Chair Robin Hutcheson and regional leaders discussing how organizations can adapt, lead, and deliver results in a rapidly changing environment.

Make sure to register ***here*** to allow us to get a rough headcount estimate! We hope to see you there!

## *11.18*

**What:** Quarterly Networking Event
**Where:** Punch Bowl Social (1691 Park Pl Blvd, Minneapolis, MN)
**When:** November 18, 2026, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM




Please join WTS-MN as we host a quarterly networking event for people to gather and connect in a casual environment. There will be no formal program, but WTS volunteers will be there to ensure connected conversations.

The event is free but please register so we can get a headcount.

Register ***here***. Hope to see you there!

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## *12.10*

**What:** 2026 WTS Minnesota Holiday Party
**Where:** St. Paul Event Center (400 Wabasha St N, 320, St. Paul, MN 55102)
**When:** December 10, 2026 from 5:30 PM - 8:30 PM

The 2026 WTS Minnesota Holiday Party and Scholarship Fundraiser is on December 10th! This year we are celebrating at the Saint Paul Event Center. This is the multimodal, interdisciplinary event of the season, featuring a 50/50 cash raffle, silent auction, and a member drawing. We will have delicious food, a cash bar, and great company! There will be gluten free, vegan, and dairy free food options.

Register ***here***, space is limited! Invite others and get ready to have a great end-of-the-year celebration. See pictures below from last year to get a sense of what it looks like. We hope to see you there!
















# WTS-MN TRANSPORTATION YOU UPDATE

Transportation YOU kicked off the 2026–2027 school year in late September with a lesson focused on making connections and shaping the year ahead. Mentees met their mentors, played Bingo and brainstormed ideas for future lessons and field trips. With 13 mentors and 34 mentees participating this year, the program is off to a strong start, with its first field trip planned for November.

## *WTS Transportation YOU Capital Summit*

For Sophia Lease and Gracia Forbis, attending the 2026 WTS Transportation YOU Capital Summit, accompanied by their mentor, Mario Ratnaraj, was an immersive five-day experience running from Sunday through Thursday with a packed agenda focused on transportation, leadership, teamwork, and career exploration. The week began Sunday with team-building activities and a high ropes adventure, giving the students an opportunity to challenge themselves and build relationships with students from across the country. Monday included a U.S. Capitol tour and mentor-led leadership session, while Tuesday provided a behind-the-scenes look at transportation through a tour of the WMATA Integrated Command Center, a visit to the HNTB office, and a Transportation Showcase.

Wednesday continued the real-world learning with a field trip to the B&P Tunnel Replacement Project, where Sophia and Gracia were able to see a major transportation infrastructure project firsthand, followed by a Women in Transportation leadership panel that introduced them to the experiences and career paths of women leading within the industry. The week concluded Thursday with another mentor-led leadership session, followed by graduation and a celebration cruise, providing an opportunity to recognize what the students had accomplished and the friendships and connections they had built during the week.










For Sophia and Gracia, the Summit provided much more than exposure to transportation projects. They had opportunities to build confidence, develop leadership skills, explore potential careers, interact with transportation professionals, and form friendships with students from across the country.

A special thank you to the WTS Minnesota Chapter and the WTS Foundation for their support and investment in Transportation YOU. Their commitment to providing experiences like the Capital Summit helps students explore what is possible and inspires the next generation of transportation professionals and leaders.

Are you a student looking for an internship? One of our partner, TKDA, is currently looking for an intern! Check this out **here**!

**We're looking for more mentors! If you're interested in becoming a T YOU mentor, please reach out to Megan Danielson at megan.danielson@kimley-horn.com or Marjo Ratnaraj at mratnaraj@HNTB.com.**

# MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

The newly formed Membership Committee just wrapped two events this fall. More events are expected to come and the committee is actively looking for members! If you are interested in being involved with WTS MN but do not know where to start, this is a great opportunity! Go ahead and reach out to Erin Daly Davenport and Ian Girardeau.

As always, please share the word about our organization, and better yet – invite them to join you at your next WTS event! We are always excited to welcome new members.

## MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ON THE MOVE!

The past president of WTS MN, **Erin Jordan**, has recently welcomed her second child! August Henry Jordan was born at 9:23 on October 17th, weighing 7 lbs 5 oz. Congratulations to Erin!



**MarySue,** Transit Section Manager with HDR, recently transferred to the Minneapolis office after seven years in Seattle. Welcome back to Minnesota, MarySue!



**Lydia Statz** will be joining MnDOT's Office of Sustainability and Public Health as the new Statewide Emission Reduction Manager. Congratulations, Lydia!



**Applications for 2027 Scholarship and Recognition Awards are now open!**

Every year, WTS MN honors the achievements of members of the Minnesota transportation community through our recognition awards, and fosters the development of individuals in the transportation field by encouraging new professionals and students to pursue careers in transportation. Applications for both scholarships and recognitions must be submitted by December 20, 2026 at 5:00 PM Central. Recipients are honored at our annual Scholarships & Recognitions Reception each spring.

Click here for Scholarships Awards. See here for Recognitions Awards.

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: LOOKING FOR SUBMISSION!

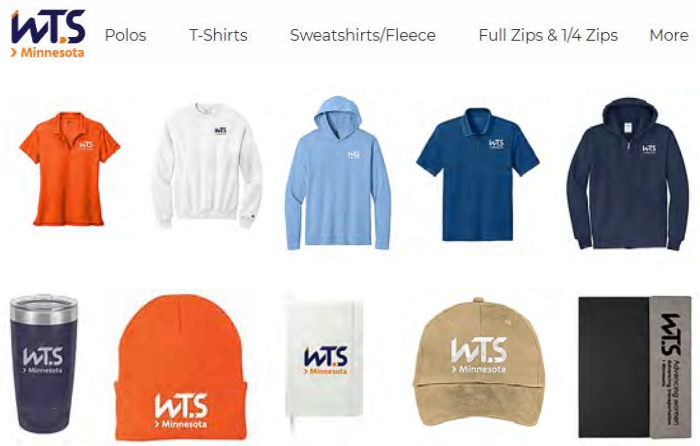
Every WTS Minnesota member has a unique story, perspective, and contribution that helps shape our transportation community. Member Spotlight is a space dedicated to celebrating the people behind the projects by highlighting career journeys, leadership, achievements, mentorship, volunteer service, and the many ways our members are making an impact across the industry. The transportation profession is built on the passion, expertise, and dedication of individuals who work every day to improve mobility, safety, and quality of life throughout our communities.

This section is designed to recognize and share those stories. From emerging professionals just beginning their careers to seasoned leaders who have helped shape the transportation industry, Member Spotlight shines a light on the experiences, accomplishments, and lessons learned. We hope these stories inspire connections, foster mentorship, and celebrate the diverse talents that make our chapter strong.

While we don't have a featured spotlight in this issue, we're actively looking for stories to share in future newsletters. ***Know someone who deserves recognition? Have a unique career journey, achievement, or experience you'd like to share? We invite you to help us highlight the incredible individuals who make up the WTS Minnesota community.*** Stay tuned for future spotlights, and consider submitting yourself or a fellow member for an upcoming feature!

Interested in sharing your story or a fellow WTS MN member for their contributions and achievements? Submit it through **this form** or email it to Rara Istifadah!

## WTS MN MERCH SHOP




We officially have a WTS-Minnesota merch store available to browse and purchase from!

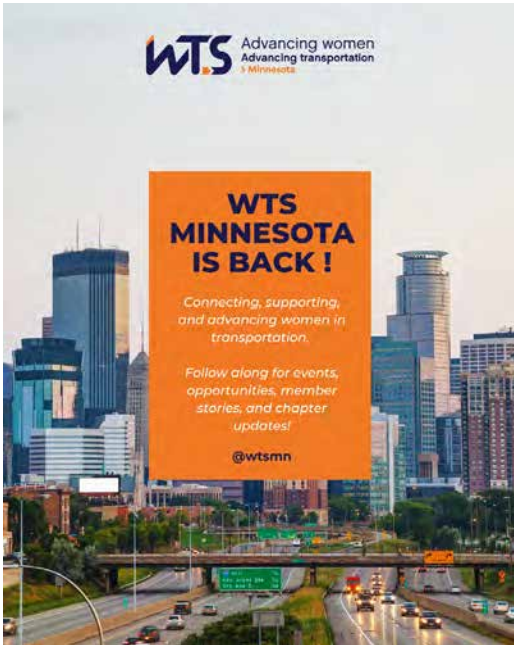
***WTS Minnesota Merch Store***

All orders are sent to production immediately after checkout and will be mailed directly to the address you provide, with standard lead times of approximately 2-3 weeks from order to delivery. This merch store may continue into following years, with items evolving over time – so keep an eye out for new options.

Do you have any ideas or items you would like to see in the store? Let Erin Jordan know! Shoot her an email as well if you have any questions or run into issues.

Happy shopping!

## NEW: @WTSMN IS BACK ON IG!




We're back! After a long hiatus, WTS Minnesota is excited to relaunch our Instagram presence.

Follow ***@wtsmn*** on Instagram to tag along as we highlight the people, programs, and events that advance women in transportation across Minnesota.

We can't wait to reconnect with our members, celebrate our community, and share what we've been working on.

Stay tuned. There's more to come.

## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



We are growing as a chapter and have so many ways to get involved including, but not limited to: **special program assistance, education outreach (school visits and tabling), mentorships, scholarship applications review, and fundraising assistance**. If you are interested in one of these roles or learning about other ways to get involved in other volunteer opportunities please contact our volunteer coordinator Emma Verkuilen.

# THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 PARTNERS!

We appreciate your support. You make all our programs, scholarships, and outreach possible!

## PLATINUM LEVEL PARTNERS

SEH

HNTB

SRF

## ADVOCATE LEVEL PARTNERS

AECOM

BOLTON & MENK

WSP

BRAUN INTERTEC
the science you build on

Stantec

wsb

KLJ

PE SERVICES

Kimley»Horn

HDR

ALLIANT ENGINEERING

## SUPPORTER LEVEL PARTNERS

Engineering Architecture Planning
TKDA

TOOLE DESIGN

Michael Baker INTERNATIONAL

## SMALL BUSINESS/DBE

ZAN ASSOCIATES

THE MINNESOTA TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION.

TC^2

RANI engineering

Stonebrooke

Pierce Pini + Associates, Inc.

ISTHMUS ENGINEERING

## PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS

Metro Transit

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Washington County