



Advancing women Advancing transportation

April 2026

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PRESIDENTS COLUMN



Dear WTS Members and Friends,

Welcome to spring! The later sunsets and warmer temperatures are bringing a much-needed burst of energy and positivity to the area after a challenging start to the year. WTS-MN is moving full steam ahead for 2026, and I am always heartened by the enthusiasm and dedication of our board members.

This shows up, among other places, in the range of programs we're offering not just throughout the year but in April alone: our DEI Committee kicked off the month with a "Making Sense Together" forum, providing a safe space for people to process the ongoing federal presence in Minnesota. On Friday, April 17, a group will ride Amtrak to Red Wing for our second annual Book Club on the Borealis event. We'll close out the month with the Scholarships and Recognitions Reception on April 22. This is a highlight of the year as we honor the achievements of our colleagues and future transportation professionals.

I'm also excited to share that after hearing that people want to do more with WTS but aren't sure how, we're revamping our "Get Involved" page to clarify what opportunities there are and how to plug in. Be on the lookout for a new overview page and volunteer interest form coming soon!

Reiterating my message from the previous newsletter: seeing the way that WTS-MN has continued to show up for one another and for all Minnesotans brings me hope and resolve during a difficult time. I am so grateful for the collective commitment toward making the local transportation industry and the broader community inclusive and joyful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia Valenti".

Alicia Valenti
2026 WTS Minnesota President



MN OFFICES: Minneapolis and Thief River Falls

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:

Design, planning, bridges, rail, traffic, transit, transportation architecture, design-build, strategic communications/public outreach, construction services, environmental, and project controls

WHY HDR SUPPORTS WTS MN: At HDR, diversity is what makes us strong, both in our project work and in the leaders who guide us every day. We recruit and retain many talented women and men in the transportation industry by providing a diverse and inclusive work environment and career advancement opportunities through enriching and challenging opportunities. We embrace the strengths and diversity of the communities we support, including the outstanding women professionals who work to solve Minnesota's transportation challenges.



MN OFFICES: Eagan, Annandale, Saint Louis Park

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:

Transportation planning, bridge design, traffic engineering, multi-modal planning & design, highway design & engineering, environmental documentation and field investigation, right-of-way acquisition

WHY KLJ SUPPORTS WTS MN: Since the 1930s, we have created solutions that turn visions into reality and improve the lives of people and communities. KLJ supports the WTS mission in 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.



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

Developmental Director:

Ashley Hudson, Bolton & Menk

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

February Program Politics in Engineering and Transportation Night with ACEC MN Young Professionals

The event was held on February 19th at Urban Growler. This is an annual event in partnership with ACEC/MN Young Professional group. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions about the upcoming legislative session to Sen Ann Johnson Stewart and Rep Tom Murphy. Approximately 20 people attended this event.



Transportation Career Shadowing Day

The WTS membership team hosted their first career shadowing day back in early February, with students and recent grads visiting the offices of Metro Transit and Bolton & Menk. Participants got an overview of what it is like to work at these organizations and then spent time with professionals in a variety of fields learning about their day-to-day jobs. The students and recent grads found it to be a helpful event for learning about different jobs in the industry and enjoyed meeting the professionals. The membership team is planning to host more of these events in the future, with an eye towards internship season. If your organization is interested in participating, please reach out to [Erin Daly-Davenport](#) and [Ian Girardeau](#).

2026 Mentoring Program Kick off Meeting

The 2026 WTS Mentoring Program kicked off with an in-person event on February 25 at WSP's downtown Minneapolis office. More than 40 participants gathered to meet their mentoring partners over light refreshments and conversation. During the kickoff, program expectations were outlined to clarify roles and responsibilities, and a mentoring readiness video was shared. The mentoring committee also reviewed the program schedule for the year, which includes monthly mentor-mentee meetings, a summer mentoring event, and a conclusion at the WTS Holiday Party in December. Throughout the year, the mentoring committee will provide regular check-ins, resources, and information about additional WTS events that mentoring partners can attend together.



PROGRAMS UPDATE

March Program

Coffee and Connections Networking Opportunity

Our quarterly networking event was held at FRGMNT Coffee - St. Anthony Main. Approximately 30 people, including professionals new to WTS as well as members, gathered to get to know each other and build community over coffee.



Coffee LGBTQ+ Transportation Professionals & Allies Networking Event

On March 26th, WTS MN hosted a gathering designed to bring together queer and allied professionals across the transportation field for an evening of connection, community-building, and shared experience in a space that reflects our values of inclusion and belonging.

Building on the momentum from WTS Minnesota's LGBTQ+ training event last fall, the networking event responded directly to what many participants shared: a desire for stronger connections and a more visible, supportive professional community. The event provided an opportunity to meet peers, expand your network, and strengthen ties across disciplines.



April Program

Making Sense Together: WTS Members-Only Current Events Forum

The WTS DEI committee hosted a safe discussion event to decompress about the shared experience over the last three months in Minnesota. Recent events in our communities have elicited a multitude of experiences and responses which has impacted our personal and professional lives. "Making Sense Together" provided a virtual safe space for WTS members to come together and connect with each other. The WTS DEI committee aims to hold similar events in the future, be on the lookout!



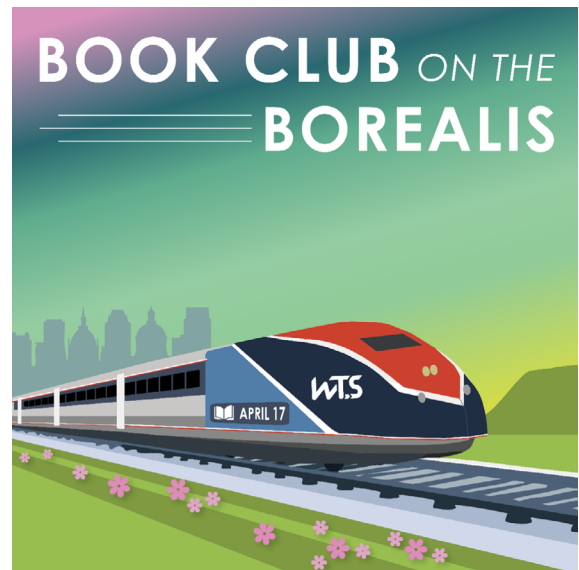
UPCOMING EVENTS

4.17

What: Book Club on the Borealis 2026
Where: Union Depot
When: April 17, 2026 from 10:30 AM - 6:30 PM

Hop aboard with WTS Minnesota for Book Club on the Borealis! Enjoy a relaxed Amtrak train ride to Red Wing with fellow transportation professionals, enjoying scenic views and catching up with colleagues new and old along the way. This year's book club will dig into "How Big Things Get Done" by Bent Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner. This book explores research-based findings to avoid the pitfalls that often arise on major infrastructure projects and other big undertakings. It's equal parts book club, networking, and train joy.

Registration is already closed as we need to purchase Amtrak tickets ahead of time for participants. If you missed the reminder email sent last week, make sure you [sign up](#) for our mailing list to not miss future events!



4.22

What: WTS Scholarships & Recognitions Reception
Where: Minneapolis Event Centers - The Riverside
When: April 22, 2026 from 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

One of our special events for the year is here! Come join us for the Scholarships & Recognitions Reception to celebrate the wins and accomplishments of some brilliant individuals in our WTS community. We'll have time for socializing and networking, followed by a sit-down program. Light refreshments will be provided.

Registration closes **April 10th at noon CST**; make sure you register [here](#) before then! Please note that we cannot accommodate late registrations as the venue has a strict capacity limit. Secure your spot now!

Do you have any questions about the reception? Ask [Greta Kurtz](#) or [Ellie Tian](#).



UPCOMING EVENTS

4.23

What: Ethics Training 2026
Where: Modist Brewing
When: April 23, 2026 from 2:30 - 6:00 PM

Join NCITE and WTS MN for a joint ethics training that will satisfy the ethics continuing education requirements for P.E. licenses. The training will be hosted by Kristine Kubes, a counselor, litigator, and mediator in the arena of design and construction from Kubes Law Office, PLLC.

This event will be held at Modist Brewing Co. (505 N 3rd St, Minneapolis, MN) with a happy hour to follow. Light appetizers and beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) will be provided at the happy hour. The schedule for the event is as follows:

- 2:30-3:00pm - Registration
- 3:00-5:00pm - Ethics Training
- 5:00-6:00pm - Networking/Happy Hour

This event will qualify for 2 PDH (P.E.) credits for ethics-related continuing education. Registration closes **Friday, April 17th**. Interested in attending? Register [here](#) to receive the event details.



5.7

What: WTS International Conference 2026
Where: Westin Bonaventure | Los Angeles, CA
When: May 5-7, 2026

This annual conference is presented by WTS International, with special recognition of WTS-LA as the local host chapter. Their leadership and support play an important role in welcoming attendees to Los Angeles and showcasing the region's transportation community.



Registration is open with standard rates until **May 3rd**. Registration includes admission to the Welcome Reception, Plenary sessions, breakout sessions, and the WTS Gala. Book your spot today [here](#)!

For general conference questions, please contact: programs@wtsinternational.org

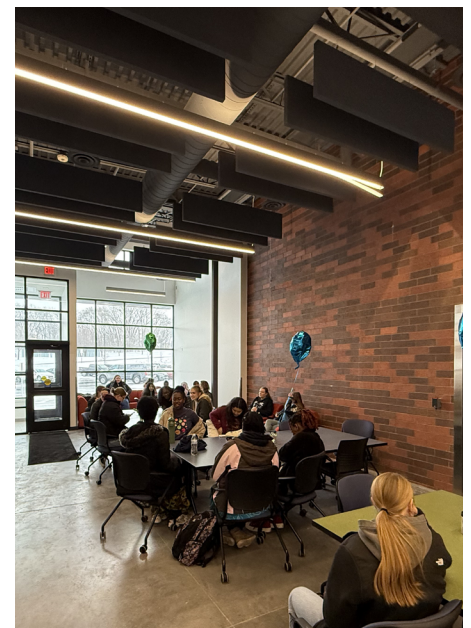
Are you planning to attend the [WTS International Conference](#) in Los Angeles this year? Reach out to [Erin Jordan](#) to connect with other Minnesota attendees ahead of time and coordinate transportation, lodging, and informal meet-ups!

WTS-MN TRANSPORTATION YOU UPDATE

The most recent TYOU field trip took place in January, when the group visited MnDOT'S Materials and Road Research Laboratory. MnDOT'S Materials and Road Research lab provides timely specialized expertise, testing, leadership, guidance and direction in geotechnical, materials, pavement and research engineering to improve performance and cost effectiveness. They also provide tools to practice the most efficient pavement designs, maintenance and construction procedures, and provide technical training to our transportation partners. High school students were able to tour the lab, ask questions on materials testing, and check out the unique tools and vehicles that MnDOT has for road research and asset management. Ron Mulvaney, MnDOT Materials Engineer, and Amy Sullivan, MnDOT Construction Technology Business Administrator, led the tour.



Following the tour of the lab, students were able to connect with women who are national leaders in the field from the MnDOT Office of Materials and Road Research: Maria Masten (MnDOT Concrete Engineer), Chelsea Bennett (MnDOT Aggregates Engineer), and Rebecca Embacher (MnDOT Advanced Materials and Technology Engineer).



Due to the March snowstorm, our Digital Delivery lesson was postponed until May. During this lesson, the group will learn about an entire lifecycle of a construction project along with how the IT world fits into construction. We will also celebrate the end of the 25-26 school year by reflecting on favorite lessons and field trips the students experienced.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

The WTS membership team recently formed a Membership Committee to help with current and future membership outreach efforts. If you are interested in getting more involved with WTS, outreach to college students, and/or helping make membership more rewarding for current and future members, reach out to [Erin Daly Davenport](#) and [Ian Girardeau](#)!

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ON THE MOVE!

Katie Roth has recently been promoted to Assistant General Manager of Planning and Project Delivert at Metro Transit.



Karen Scheffing recently step into a new position at TKDA as a Senior Planner. Great news, Karen!



One of our members was recently awarded the UMN Interdisciplinary Doctoral Fellowship (IDF) and the AECOM's 2026 Strategic Partner Scholarship from WTS International. Awesome achievements!

NEW: MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Gloria Jeff is an indelible force on transportation in Minnesota, across the nation, and throughout the profession. One example from earlier in her career illustrates her impact over decades. Gloria championed the second international conference in 1996 on Women's Issues in Transportation, now called Women and Gender in Transportation. The Transportation Research Board has convened this conference seven times since its inception in 1978. Gloria was elevating conversations about equity and gender decades before MnDOT initiated its first research project on this topic.

During my time with MnDOT, Gloria would often be the first to speak up in a meeting. She asked tough questions of our system and ensured that those who have historically been excluded were being considered in our decisions. Her questions sometimes created discomfort for others, largely because she pushed conversations that the field often avoids. While Gloria is tough on problems, she is soft on people, and she is respectful and kind when navigating difficult situations.

In one such instance, I reached out to Gloria to discuss and process some pointed feedback I received from a peer. Gloria listened patiently while I described the situation, then she kindly offered another perspective based on our interactions together. Her response was not intended to negate the other feedback, but rather to offer additional information to consider. Gloria's commitment to lifting up people and challenging the system has been central in all my interactions with her.

Gloria has consistently framed transportation as an opportunity and not an end in itself. Because of her leadership, this outlook is becoming more embedded in our work. Many people are unaware of her contributions to the transportation industry and our community, and I am glad to highlight the achievements of her career as she steps into a new role with Bolton and Menk. This role offers her more space to advise another generation of transportation leaders, ensuring that we learn from her experience, carry her outlook forward, and give her the recognition she deserves.

This story was submitted by Hally Turner. 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!](#)

NEW: WTS MN MERCH SHOP



Polos T-Shirts Sweatshirts/Fleece Full Zips & 1/4 Zips More



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!

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



ADVOCATE LEVEL PARTNERS



SUPPORTER LEVEL PARTNERS



SMALL BUSINESS/DBE



PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS

