Dear WTS Members and Friends,

This past month I had the opportunity to attend the WTS Signature Leadership Training in Washington DC with a few dozen inspiring leaders from across the US and Canada. It was a great chance to connect with other women in the profession and have an immersive leadership training. It was also a reminder of the opportunities WTS provides outside of Minnesota and the amazing things other chapters are doing. Check out the event calendar on the International website to see programs that other chapters are hosting! Some are virtual or you could connect with another chapter if you happen to be traveling.

Another great offering from WTS is the International Conference which will be in Atlanta May 10-12, 2023. If you have not attended this conference, I highly encourage it. There is an amazing mix of technical and leadership sessions which is rare mix for professional conferences. WTS Minnesota does offer scholarships to our members to attend the conference – keep an eye out for that solicitation in early 2023. You should also consider submitting an abstract so we can showcase the great work occurring in Minnesota! The call for abstracts closes on December 16.

Finally, make sure you register for the annual holiday party on December 8. Everyone knows that this is the best transportation celebration of the year, and this year will be no different!

Lyssa Leitner
President WTS MN Chapter
DEI Perspective: Edna McKenzie of Midwest Select Contracting

For this month’s newsletter the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee would like to highlight a WTS Minnesota Chapter Member. Edna McKenzie has been involved with WTS for 4 years and has been most recently engaged with the WTS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. She is the owner of Midwest Select Contracting, a firm that specializes in construction and environmental services and is a Minority Owned, Women Owned, and Veteran Owned Small Business.

How did you get into transportation?

Ashanti Payne, formerly with MnDOT Civil Rights office provided an opportunity for our company to not only learn about construction inspections services but to also perform construction inspection services through a small business pilot program centering on ADA compliance of pedestrian systems. This opportunity directly aligned with my values, mission, and vision of the company. At the time my mission was to build, rehabilitate, maintain, as well as to make public structures, spaces safe and accessible for all.

What do you enjoy most about working in Construction Services?

What I enjoy most about working in Construction Services is knowing that through our services we help to improve the social mobility and overall health and well-being of communities because our projects involve improving public infrastructure and facilities such as roads, bridges, walkways, bike paths, transit, and storm sewer.

What is the most important value or set of skills you take with you into your work?

A respect for Humanity

What do you see as some of the major progress that has been made for women in the transportation industry?

In May of this year, I attended for the first time the WTS annual Conference and was just blown away by the number of professional women attending the event as well as the panelist and presenters who were leaders of major companies, organizations, and agencies being involved at the local, regional, and federal level.

What were the key factors that led to that progress?

I believe the key factors are opportunity to become involved in carrying out the mission and vision of WTS, women mentorship, open and honest conversations around the impact of transportation policies and investments on communities with a focus on equity, inclusion, and diversity.

What would you say to a young person graduating with a transportation degree or entering a career in transportation now, what should they use to measure the progress of their career?

Those graduating with a transportation degree will assume roles as transportation planners, designers, policy makers, administrative leaders, and environmental specialist- so to those transportation specialists I would say: Remember that your actions and decisions involve people. Please adopt an equity and racial impact framework when engaging in decision-making or delivering a service. I believe they should measure the progress of their career through the level of satisfaction and internal motivation they receive from positively contributing to the disciplines of transportation that they choose to pursue.
Diversity and Inclusion Article (Continued)

What do you see as the priority challenges for women and specifically women in leadership for transportation?

Equity in positions, opportunities and pay

How can WTS support women-owned businesses, and women in leadership positions like yours? What do you see as WTS’s role into the future?

To continue to be a resource and advocacy network for all women in transportation especially those pursuing leadership. Continue WTS’ mentorship program, scholarship program, networking and building relationships, educational events as well as recognition ceremonies

Where are some opportunities within the organization?

DEI committee gives me an opportunity to share my experiences, contribute to an equitable framework, engage in open and honest communications, allow other to see transportation related experiences through my eyes as an African American woman.

What do you see as challenges for the organization?

I agree with a recent article I read which stated that an overall objective of the transit community is to help develop an enhanced and more inclusive approach to public transportation planning and decision making. Public transportation planners have a critical role in addressing and correcting many of the problems caused by a 20th- and 21st-century transportation sector that severely impacted and, in some cases, destroyed Black communities in the building of today’s transportation systems and network. There exist racial inequities in transportation planning, investments, and employment. WTS should avoid becoming a political body, but remain a voice of advocacy with open space for learning and storytelling that will hopefully lead to a stronger membership organization that is welcoming to all demographics.

Creating a diverse and inclusive membership body; finding and learning ways to learn about and involve members who are diverse in culture and perspective, keeping current membership who are willing to evolve as membership demographics change and engage in courageous conversations involving equity and inclusion in all aspects of transportation.

What do you want members to know most about the work you do?

That I am passionate about helping to develop living communities by providing transportation design, planning, construction inspection and environmental consultancy in the built environment so people can live their best lives, while also being a responsible steward of our natural one. On every project I am committed to performing exceptionally and responsibly. On each project I take seriously my responsibilities as a construction manager and administrator- to the owner, to the prime, to the environment and to the community. At the heart of why I do what I do is environmental stewardship and economic prosperity for all. People deserve functional public facilities, to live life with integrity.
PROGRAMS UPDATE

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM RECAP—WTS BOARD RECRUITMENT EVENT

WTS members and friends were invited to join the September WTS Board meeting either in-person or virtually to sit in and learn exactly what is discussed at monthly board meetings! Everyone was then invited to Dual Citizen Brewery for beverages and snacks to round out the recruitment event and continue discussing and answering questions about joining the WTS board. Thank you to everyone who joined and expressed interest in joining the board in 2023!

OCTOBER PROGRAM RECAP—JOINT WTS/CTS STUDENT NETWORKING EVENT, FEATURING THE UNIVERSITY AND 4TH STREET REDESIGN PROJECT

For our October Program, WTS joined forces with the University of Minnesota’s Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) to host a Student Networking Event and technical presentation highlighting the University Avenue and 4th Street Redesign Project through campus. The event was hosted in the Civil Engineering building and welcomed many students and professionals to network and exchange ideas for improving walking and biking on campus. The presentation was led by Kelly Agosto of Hennepin County as well as Nick Turner, Scott Poska, and Eric Plemel of Alliant Engineering. Thank you to our presenters and those who attended! The programs committee looks forward to continuing student engagement in 2023.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM — NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH DISCUSSION & ROUNDTABLE

Join WTS and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to review presentations, and resources for celebrating, working with, and supporting tribal governments and communities, and having round table discussions related to what actions we can take as an organization and individuals. This event will be held on November 29th from 9 to 10:30 AM at Register Here.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM — POSTPONED TO 2023!

Unfortunately, due to poor weather, the November 10 program was cancelled. It will be postponed until Spring 2023 and will highlight the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s Cedar Lake-Lake of the Isles Master Plan. Thank you to those who expressed interest in this outdoor/family-friendly program – stay tuned for updates in 2023!

2022 WTS MINNESOTA HOLIDAY PARTY—DECEMBER 8TH FROM 5:30 TO 8:30 AT 413 ON WACOUTA EVENT CENTER

You’re invited to the WTS Minnesota Holiday Party and Scholarship Fundraiser! This is the multimodal, interdisciplinary event of the season. Join us for delicious food, cash bar, and great company! This year’s party will feature a cash raffle, members-only gift card drawing, and silent auction. Register here!

We are still looking for donations for the silent auction. Reach out to Alicia Valenti (avalenti@srfconsulting.com) if you are interested in donating or if you suggestions for potential donors!

Send Us Your Ideas for Programs!

The WTS Programs committee is planning monthly programs ideas for 2023! If you have any ideas for in-person tours, panel discussions, outdoor events, or engaging presentations—please contact Allie Futhey (afuthey@isthmusengineering.com) or Erin Jordan (ejordan@sehinc.com).
CHAPTER UPDATES

TYOU

TYOU is working with Blaine High School again this year and has a cohort of about 20 freshman and sophomores who attended this year’s kick-off on October 17th. There are three field trips planned this year centered on transportation.

- Nov 21st at the Mall of America
- Jan 19th at the Regional Transportation Management Center
- Spring at the Minnesota Zoo and University of Minnesota.

Reach out to Laura Melcher (lmelcher@wsbeng.com) or Melissa Duhn (MDuhn@braunintertec.com) if you are interested in getting involved!

2023 SCHOLARSHIPS APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN!

The WTS Minnesota women scholarships are competitive and are based on the applicant’s specific transportation goals, academic record, and transportation-related activities or job skills. Minority applicants are encouraged to apply. Financial need is not a primary consideration.

- Dan Meyers High School Scholarship — $2,000
- Katherine Turnbull Undergraduate Leadership Scholarship — $2,000
- Donna Allen undergraduate Scholarship — $2,000
- WTS Minnesota Graduate Scholarship — $2,000
- WTS Technical Scholarship — $2,000

Applications are due by Friday, December 16th at 5 PM. Apply here. Learn more about last year’s winners here.

CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:


WHY SEH SUPPORTS WTS MN:

SEH is proud to continuously support WTS Minnesota with its mission of advancing the transportation industry through engaging programs, professional development, networking opportunities, scholarships, and so much more. Many of our employees have benefited greatly from the resources and relationships built through WTS-MN. At SEH, we believe that these opportunities and relationships are instrumental in growing strong, collaborative, and welcoming teams and communities.

MN OFFICES:

BRainerd, DULuth, grand rapids, Hutchinson, MANKato, MinneTOnka, ROChester, ST. cloud, ST. PAul, Virginia
CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT (CONTINUED)

Stantec

MN OFFICES:
MINNEAPOLIS, DULUTH, GOLDEN VALLEY, MAPLE PLAIN, ROCHESTER, ST. CLOUD, AND WOODBURY

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:

WHY STANTEC SUPPORTS WTS MN:
At Stantec, we create opportunity by inviting, embracing, and celebrating differences. Because we believe that truly transformative work is born from diversity, we champion diversity and inclusion throughout our organization. We support WTS Minnesota because it provides a platform for women in the transportation industry to grow through professional development and networking. This foundation has been instrumental in the growth of many of our team members. We are proud to be the recipient of the 2020 WTS Employer of the Year award because at Stantec, we believe we are better together.

SRF

MN OFFICES:
MINNEAPOLIS AND SAINT PAUL

WHY SRF SUPPORTS WTS MN:
SRF appreciates the many opportunities afforded by WTS to cultivate a network of like-minded professionals as well as benefit from professional development opportunities.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:
CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: We are growing as a chapter and have so many ways to get involved. See what opportunities are available here (https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PHYKBD)!

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ON THE MOVE

Celebrating milestones for our members and friends. Have member news to share? Send in snippets about job changes, life milestones, and other accomplishments to Emily Bowen so we can recognize our colleagues!

Alicia Vap - Is the new director for Gold Line BRT at Metro Transit.

Rachel Haase - Promoted to Associate at Kimley-Horn.

Jennifer Wiltgen - Started a new position as the Planning Program Coordinator in Planning, Program Management, and Transit at MnDOT Metro District.

Carri Sampson - Promoted to manager of the Transit Control Center at Metro Transit.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2022 SPONSORS:

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

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