



Advancing women Advancing transportation *Summer 2026*

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PRESIDENTS COLUMN



Dear WTS Members and Friends,

Summer has officially begun and as usual, the calendar is full of far more events than any one person could hope to attend. These include but are not limited to art fairs, farmers markets, Open Streets, and naturally, WTS events like the recent networking Como Park Pavilion happy hour and annual Saints game outing, and tonight's inaugural networking event hosted by WTS past presidents.

May and June also provided an abundance of professional development opportunities. Our WTS-Minnesota Chapter was represented by over 20 members at the 2026 WTS-International Conference hosted in Los Angeles. The conference offered several members chapter leadership training, mid-career panel discussions, and many opportunities to explore the City through technical tours of unique transit, port, and bikeway projects. Chapter members Lyssa Leitner, Liz Powell, and Tara Olds also participated in the thoughtful LGBTQ+ Understanding and Allyship panel, which was well attended by members from all chapters!

Just a few days later, Minneapolis hosted NACTO's Designing Cities Conference, with highlights including a morning fun run, a DJ bike ride, and NACTO After Dark. It was heartening to see and experience the city through a visitor's eyes and be reminded of all that we've accomplished to prioritize people in our streets.

Of course, these improvements don't just appear—they take a bit of effort to get built, and as we all know, summer is synonymous with construction season in Minnesota. While road closures and bus bridges can be an inconvenience, I'm looking forward to a reconstructed Franklin Avenue that's safer for people using all modes, as well as enhanced operations on the Blue Line once the current Renew the Blue work is complete, to name a few.

Although we're just barely halfway through the year, it's already time to start thinking about the 2027 board. We're holding a board recruitment meeting and ice cream social (!) on August 12 in St. Paul. Check [page 9](#) for more details on the event and the roles we'll be looking fill, and please reach out to me or any board member with any questions.

Happy summer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia Valenti". The script is fluid and cursive.

Alicia Valenti
2026 WTS Minnesota President

CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



MN OFFICES: Minneapolis, Burnsville, Baxter, Chaska, Duluth, Eden Prairie, Fairmont, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, Mankato, Mountain Iron, Oakdale, Plymouth, Ramsey, Rochester, Sleepy Eye, St. Cloud, Willmar

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:

Civil/Municipal Planning & Engineering, Water & Wastewater Engineering, Transportation Planning & Engineering, Structures, Aviation, Planning & Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, Water Resources Engineering, Environmental Planning & Permitting, CE&I, Land Surveying, GIS, Project Funding, Engagement, Visual Communications

WHY BOLTON & MENK SUPPORTS WTS MN:

We specialize in providing community infrastructure solutions. Since 1949, we have been committed to improving quality of life through engineering excellence and client satisfaction. From advocating for our communities to designing their dreams to finding funding; we take pride in our work because we live in these same communities. Bolton & Menk is proud to support WTS Minnesota in promoting diversity and advancement of women in transportation.



MN OFFICES: Minneapolis (multiple), Duluth, Eagan, and Burnsville

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED:

Alternative Delivery, Aviation Design, Aviation Planning, Bridge Design, Coastal Engineering, Cut and Cover Tunneling, Geotechnical and Ground Engineering, Highway and Road Design, Maritime Advisory, Maritime Planning and Analysis, Maritime Terminal Engineering, Mobility Operations, Railway Safety and Security, Railway Sustainability, Reality Capture Scanning Services, Road Usage Charging, Rock Tunneling, Soft Ground Tunneling, Surveying, Mapping and GIS, Transportation Lighting Design, Transportation Planning, Trenchless Tunneling Technology, Tunnel Safety and Security

WHY WSP SUPPORTS WTS MN:

WSP USA Inc. is one of the world's leading engineering and professional services firms, dedicated to serving local communities with innovative, resilient solutions. Our local Minnesota team includes over 200 professionals across six offices, bolstered by over 20,000 nationwide engineers, planners and strategic advisors. WSP delivers comprehensive transportation services across the full project lifecycle. With more than a century of transportation experience, we partner with federal, state and local agencies to develop infrastructure that enhances mobility, strengthens communities, supports economic growth, advances social equity, and promotes environmental stewardship. Our multidisciplinary teams provide solutions for highways, bridges, transit and rail, aviation, maritime facilities, and emerging mobility systems, helping clients navigate complex funding, regulatory, sustainability, and resilience challenges while successfully delivering projects from concept through completion. We value our people and care about their progress, and offer fulfilling career development for our professionals. To realize this goal, WSP leverages its partnership with WTS-I and WTS-MN as a go-to association for the transportation industry on shaping a future workforce that is inclusive at all levels.

WTS-MN 2026 Board



Alicia Valenti
President



Emily Goodell
Vice President



Erin Jordan
Past President



Madeline Dahlheimer
Secretary



Kara Langford
Treasurer



Erin Daly Davenport
Membership Director



Catherine Judd
Development Director



Rara Istifadah
Marketing Director



Karen Scheffing
Program Co-Director



Ella Rasp
Program Co-Director



Kaitlyn Denten
Scholarship & Recognition Director



Ian Girardeau
Membership Chair



Ellie (Yu) Tian
Special Event Co-Chair



Greta Kurtz
Special Event Co-Chair



Joanne Cho
Diversity & Inclusion Co-Chair



Priyam Saxena
Diversity & Inclusion Co-Chair



Zoey Mauck
Programs Co-Chair



Margaret Donahoe
Programs Co-Chair



Megan Danielson
Transportation You Co-Chair



Mario Ratnaraj
Transportation YOU Co-Chair



Sylvie Guezeon
Development Chair



Katie Hvizdos
Social Media Chair



Sara Allen
Website Chair



Jamie Bents
Mentoring Co-Chair



Rory Talbot
Mentoring Co-Chair



Morgan Abbott
Regional Board Representative



Emma Verkuilen
Volunteer Coordinator



Advancing women
Advancing transportation

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

April Program

Book Club on the Borealis

On April 17, WTS Minnesota hosted its annual Book Club on the Borealis, bringing transportation professionals together for a unique networking and learning experience aboard Amtrak's Borealis train. Participants traveled from Saint Paul to Red Wing while discussing "How Big Things Get Done" by Bent Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner, a book that explores strategies for successfully delivering major infrastructure projects. The event combined professional development, networking, and a scenic rail journey, fostering connections among transportation practitioners from across the region.

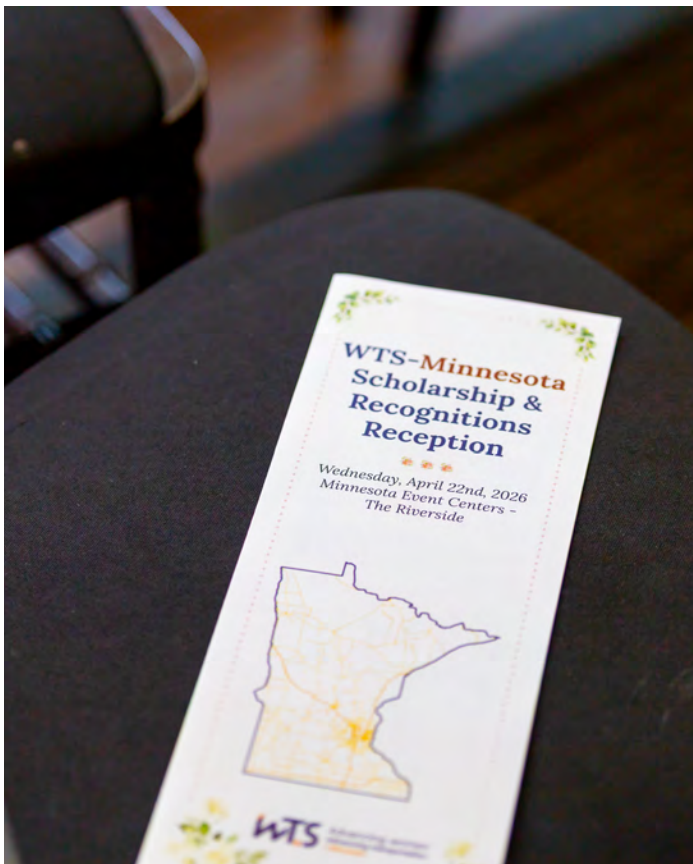
Ethics Training 2026

On April 23, WTS Minnesota partnered with NCITE to offer a joint ethics training at Modist Brewing in Minneapolis. Led by Kristine Kubes of Kubes Law Office, the session provided transportation and engineering professionals with valuable insights into ethics issues in the design and construction industry while satisfying continuing education requirements for licensed engineers. The event concluded with a networking happy hour, giving attendees an opportunity to connect with colleagues and industry peers in a relaxed setting.

2026 Scholarships and Recognitions Reception

The 2026 Scholarships & Recognitions Reception was a tremendous success. In late April, we had over 150 people join us at the Minneapolis Events Center to celebrate our awardees and their accomplishments (shown on the next page).

Thank you to [our partners](#), and thank you, members and supporters, for a wonderful event!



Recognitions



Past President Award
Erin Jordan
SEH



Member of the Year Award
Elizabeth Powell
MnDOT



Woman of the Year Award
Heather Kienitz, PE
SEH



Woman to Watch Award
Andrea Rehm, AICP
Washington County



Honorable Ray LaHood Award
Craig Vaughn
TC2



Employer of the Year Award
HNTB Corporation



Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award
Policy Planning Unit, Office of
Transportation System Management
(MnDOT)



Innovative Transportation Solution Award
Automated Vehicle Policy Team
(MnDOT)

Scholarships



WTS MN Graduate Scholarship
Connelia Mensah
Minnesota State University -
Mankato



Donna Allen Undergraduate Scholarship
Audra Johnson
University of Minnesota -
Twin Cities



Katherine Turnbull Leadership Undergraduate Scholarship
Olivia Richart
University of North Dakota



Dan Meyers High School Scholarship
Reema Krishnan
Blaine High School



WTS/MSES Workforce Development High School Scholarship
Maggie Novotny
Spectrum High School



WTS/MSES Advancing Woman in Transportation Graduate Scholarship
Eleanor Fitzwilliams
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities



WTS/MSES Advancing Woman in Transportation Graduate Scholarship
Sylvie Guezeon
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities



WTS Technical School Scholarship
Kel Perlick
Dakota County Technical College

PROGRAMS UPDATE

May Program

WTS International Conference 2026

This spring, transportation professionals from across North America gathered in Los Angeles, California, for the WTS International Conference. The conference brought together industry leaders, emerging professionals, and chapter representatives to share insights, explore innovative transportation solutions, and strengthen connections across the WTS network.

WTS Minnesota was well represented, with a strong delegation of members attending conference sessions, networking events, leadership meetings, and professional development opportunities. As shown in the photos, our chapter had an impressive presence throughout the conference and proudly contributed to conversations shaping the future of transportation and the continued growth of WTS.

A few takeaways shared by our members:

- » “Get clarity on what you want to do vs. what you’re good at”
- » “Find and lean into your purpose and into the uncomfortable”
- » “Do your job well so you can be in places where people start to notice”
- » “Look at what comes naturally vs what exhausts you – lean into these”

The conference left attendees energized, inspired, and equipped with new ideas to bring back to Minnesota as we continue advancing WTS’s mission to attract, sustain, connect, and advance women in transportation.



PROGRAMS UPDATE

June Program



Networking Happy Hour & Concert

On June 16th, WTS Minnesota members and guests gathered for a relaxed evening of networking and connection at our quarterly Happy Hour and Concert event. Attendees enjoyed casual conversations, strengthened professional relationships, and welcomed new faces to the WTS community. The evening concluded with a performance by the City of Lakes Community Band, featuring one of our own WTS members, making for a fun and memorable summer gathering.



Transportation Alliance Transportation Infrastructure Conference

On June 22nd, WTS Minnesota members joined transportation leaders, industry partners, and policymakers for the Transportation Infrastructure Conference to discuss the future of federal transportation funding as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) approaches expiration. Attendees heard updates from Minnesota's Congressional Delegation and transportation experts on the impacts of IIJA,

July Program



Industry Partners Saints Game Event

WTS Minnesota 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

WTS MN partnered with the APA MN Emerging Professionals Committee to host an interactive workshop focused on strengthening public speaking and advocacy skills. Led by Beth Plamondon and Tane Danger, attendees gained practical tools for communicating with confidence, advancing their careers through effective advocacy, and building influence in professional settings. Through in-person exercises, participants practiced real-world communication techniques in a supportive environment while earning 2 AICP CM credits.

UPCOMING EVENTS

8.6

What: Past Presidents and Friends Networking
Where: City House (258 Mill St, St Paul, MN 55102)
When: August 6th, 2026 from 4:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Join us for a special networking event hosted by the WTS MN Past Presidents! This is your chance to connect with the leaders who have guided WTS MN throughout its 40+ year history. Come network, connect (or reconnect!), and be inspired by the legacy of leadership that continues to shape our organization today. Stop by for a few minutes or feel free to stay for the entire time! All members and friends are welcome. Light appetizers will be hosted, and additional food and beverages are available for purchase.

Make sure to register [here](#) to allow us to get a rough headcount estimate! We hope to see you there!



8.12

What: Board Meeting and Recruitment Ice Cream Social
Where: SRF Office (2550 University Ave W)
When: August 12, 2026, 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Interested in getting more involved with WTS Minnesota? Join us on Wednesday, August 12 for a Board Meeting and Recruitment Ice Cream Social!

Current and prospective board members are invited to attend the WTS Minnesota Board Meeting from 4:30–5:30 p.m. at SRF Consulting Group's St. Paul office (2550 University Avenue W.). Following the meeting, we'll head to South Saint Anthony Park for ice cream and social time where attendees can learn more about 2027 board and committee opportunities, connect with current board members, and explore ways to get involved with the chapter.

Whether you're curious about volunteering, leadership opportunities, or simply want to grow your WTS network, we'd love to see you there!



We welcome applications for all roles, especially:

- » Secretary
- » Development Director
- » Development Chair
- » Programs Co-Director
- » Social Media Chair
- » DEI Co-Chair
- » Mentoring Chair

WTS-MN TRANSPORTATION YOU UPDATE

In April, Transportation YOU students visited the University of St. Thomas, where they met with Dr. Ali Ling, Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering. Dr. Ling provided an overview of the university's engineering program and led students through a hands-on water and wastewater engineering experience, offering a glimpse into the field's real-world applications. Following the campus tour, the group visited Kimley-Horn and participated in a young professionals panel, where students had the opportunity to ask questions about college life, career pathways, and transitioning from school to the transportation industry.



Also in April, T YOU mentee and senior Reema Krishnan received the Dan Myers Scholarship at the WTS Scholarships and Recognitions Reception. She will be attending the University of California, Berkeley in the fall and plans to study data science.



The last lesson for the 2025-2026 school year was held on May 11, where the group celebrated our seven graduating seniors.

Lastly, Mentor Mario Ratnaraj attended the Capital Summit in late June with two Blaine High School T YOU members.



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 mrataraj@HNTB.com.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

The newly formed Membership Committee is working on two upcoming events that you won't want to miss! This September we will be hosting another edition of the Transportation Career Shadowing Day that we debuted in February. We also have a Member Appreciation Event in the works for October to celebrate the incredible folks who make up this community – stay tuned for more details!

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ON THE MOVE!

The current president of WTS MN, **Alicia Valenti**, was recently selected for the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) Class of 2027. In June, the 36-person cohort gathered for the ELP opening session in Baltimore. She felt joyful to start forming relationships with transportation professionals from across the US and Canada. Alicia is excited to learn with and from her leadership cohort throughout the next year, and to apply these lessons to strengthen WTS Minnesota and the broader local transportation industry.



Maria Wardoku recently joined MnDOT as their new Asset Management Planning Director. Congratulations, Maria!



Liz Powell recently joined the Metro Division Multimodal Planning Team at MnDOT in May. Congratulations, Liz!



Ellen Mueller has recently started at Stantec as a Transportation Planner. Congratulations, Ellen!



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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!](#)

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](#).

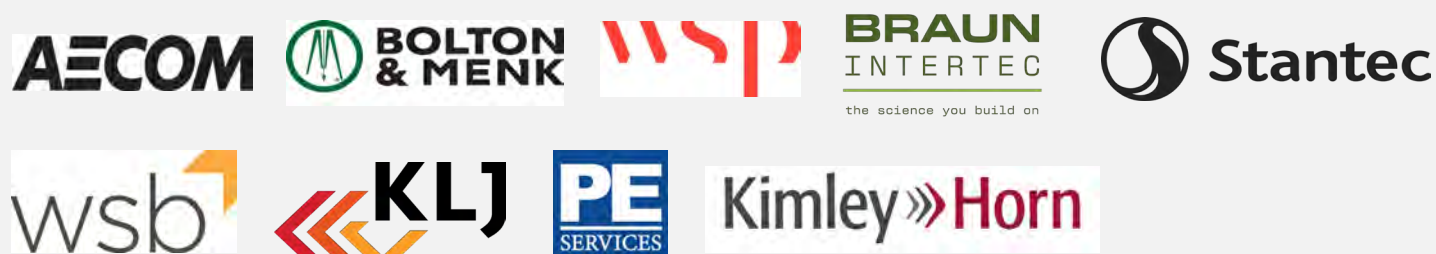
THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 PARTNERS!

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

