



ABIDE Corner

September covers a few themes that can address diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging in transportation.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Hispanic Heritage Month takes place from September 15 to October 15 annually. This is a time to honor Hispanic and Latinx communities and their contribution to society, specifically Hispanic and Latinx leaders and workers in the transportation industry.

Federico Peña became the first Hispanic American to hold the position of US Secretary of Transportation in 1993 and also was selected as the Secretary of Energy in 1997. Born in Laredo, Texas, he was trained as a civil rights lawyer. His work in multicultural education led him to draft a law for bilingual education that passed the Colorado legislature. From this task, he learned “there was something positive about being in elected office.” He then ran for mayor of Denver and won.



Peña had been raised to appreciate historic buildings, since his father maintained a former railroad station and his uncle was an architect. During his time as mayor, he became a strong proponent for historic preservation. One building he advocated to protect was the Mayan Theatre as part of the [Hispanic Heritage Diversity Initiative](#).

He also led efforts to build the Denver International Airport, whose main access road is now named after him. Peña felt the airport was a “breakthrough” project, by bringing Denver’s neighboring counties and municipalities together.

Once Peña became US Secretary of Transportation, he built relationships that allowed US airlines to fly anywhere around the world. He also began discussions about innovative technologies such as driverless cars.

More information can be found on Federico Peña at these links:

- [Federico Peña, in his own words](#)
- [Association for Commuter Transportation: Hispanic Heritage Month](#)

Flora Castillo is a US immigrant from El Salvador with over 20 years of experience in healthcare and public transportation. She was a former member of boards for several non-profit equity, transit, and media organizations including National Urban Fellows, Rail-Volution, WHYY, and others. Castillo was also the first Latina and sixth woman elected chair to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in 2012, served as their spokesperson, and was pivotal in guiding APTA's Mobility Recovery and Restoration Task Force by shaping the future of public transportation with a focus on health, safety, equity, and homelessness. She was also appointed as a member of the Advisory Committee on Transportation Equity by former US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg in 2023.



Castillo was the National Vice President of Transportation for UnitedHealthcare Community & State (UHC). She led innovative quality transportation strategies, solutions, and pilots to address social determinants of health for members and high utilizers. She served over two decades as a senior policymaker and member of the board of directors at New Jersey Transit. She was appointed in that role by former Governor Christine Todd Whitman and was the first Latina and youngest member of the board as a part of 7 Democratic and Republican administrations.

As a member of COMTO (Conference of Minority Transportation Officials), Castillo has served in leadership roles, championing programs that foster diversity and inclusivity in the transportation sector.

More information can be found on Flora Castillo at these links:

- [COMTO: Flora Castillo](#)
- [Association for Commuter Transportation: Hispanic Heritage Month](#)

International Equal Pay Day

This day, observed on September 18, represents the longstanding efforts towards the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value. It further builds on the United Nations' commitment to human rights and against all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against women and girls.

The gender pay gap is estimated at around 20 percent globally. Gender equality continues to be held back owing to the persistence of historical and structural unequal power relations between women and men. While equal pay for men and women has been widely endorsed, applying it in practice has been difficult. In 2020, only 6 out of 15 industries evidence female CEOs in their top 10 companies. The transportation industry showed a wide gender wage gap at that time, within which the average male CEO was paid 45 times more than female counterparts, a gap of almost \$13 million.

WTS International (and specifically, the NC Triangle Chapter) can and does work to narrow the pay gap, as women work just as hard as men, especially in the transportation industry.

More information can be found on International Equal Pay Day at these links:

- [United Nations: International Equal Pay Day](#)
- [Institute for Women's Policy Research: Why do we need International Equal Pay Day?](#)

International Day of Sign Languages

The International Day of Sign Languages, observed September 23, supports and helps to protect the linguistic identity and cultural diversity of all deaf people and other sign languages users. With over 70 million deaf people worldwide, sign language is a very usable tool.

NCDOT is implementing a device for deaf and deafblind pedestrians called an Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS), which includes vibrating surfaces. Pedestrian pushbuttons and providing non-visual cues are items used to let these pedestrians know when it is safe to cross the street.

More information can be found on the International Day of Sign Languages and APSs at these sites:

- [United Nations: International Day of Sign Languages](#)
- [NCDOT's 2015 ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan](#)

You can also enjoy each of these celebrations by getting involved in your WTSI chapter by joining a committee or attending an event or webinar. Help our chapter grow!

Upcoming Events

- WTS-Boston Management Networking Roundtable: Positioning in Uncertain Times, September 9, 2025, 4-6pm, STV, One Financial Center, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02111. More information is available at this link: [WTS-Boston Management Networking Roundtable - Positioning in Uncertain Times | WTS](#)
- WTS Greater Dallas/Fort Worth: Diversity in Motion Panel, September 16, 2025, 4-6pm, Crowne Plaza Dallas Market Center – Love Field by IHG, 7050 North Stemmons Freeway, Dallas, TX 75247. More information is available at this link: [WTS Greater Dallas/Fort Worth - Diversity in Motion Panel | WTS](#)
- 2025 Colorado Springs Walkability Summit, September 19, 2025, 8am-3:30pm, Peak Vista Community Health Center, 1815 Jet Wing Drive, Colorado Springs, Co, 80916. More information on volunteering is available at this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdjGPeIAkbPbuo6cZBrcYkbMW3sE4T89awzCldjMVgX5wFCuQ/viewform?pli=1&mc_cid=4360d76c66&mc_eid=5c247d364a

- From Understanding to Action: LGBTQIA+ Identities and Allyship, September 19, 2025, 9-11am, Queermunity MN, 3036 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN, 55408. More information is available at this link: [From Understanding to Action: LGBTQIA+ Identities and Allyship | WTS](#)
- WTS-Boston DEI Book Club: Inclusive Transportation – A Manifesto for Repairing Divided Communities, December 3, 2025, 6-7pm, virtual. More information is available at this link: [DEI Book Club - Inclusive Transportation: A Manifesto for Repairing Divided Communities | WTS](#)

Continue to be a DEIB Advocate for Women!