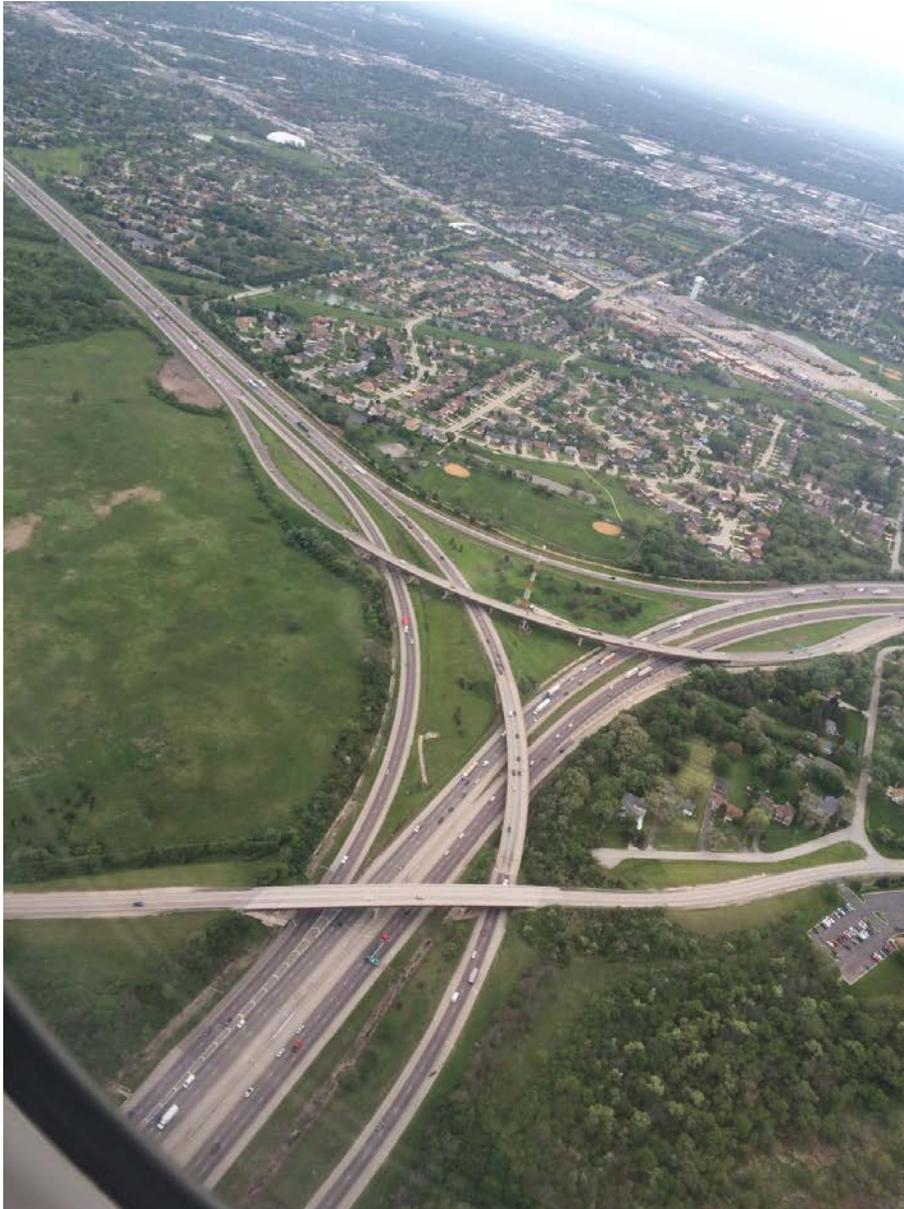


# Converge Chicago!

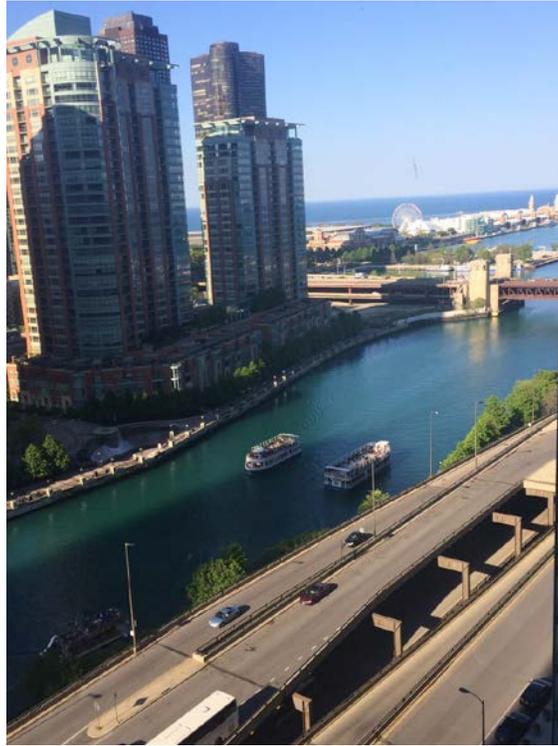
By Nichette Hill

I had the opportunity to attend the WTS International Conference in Chicago, Ill., on May 20-22. It was an amazing experience! So much so that I am unsure if I can capture my experience in a mere article. The opportunity to meet and network with such professional and successful woman is one that I will always remember.

Chicago is such a wonderful city, so it is no surprise that WTS would select such a city to host the conference! The view from the airplane was so awe-inspiring that I could not resist taking photos of the interchanges. Roadway Designer at heart.



The conference began on Tuesday with a WTS Foundation Board Meeting and Board of Directors Meeting, but I, along with two fellow NC Triangle Chapter members, attended Wednesday to Friday. Wednesday was filled with many activities and tours. One of these was the tour of the O'Hare Airfield where attendees could hear about the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP). The OMP is one of the largest construction projects in the country at one of the world's busiest airports. Attendees could also take a tour of the "Magnificence along Chicago River" to view the historic movable bridges. I was extremely fascinated by the view of the River Walk from my hotel window.



On Wednesday, we attended the Welcome Reception in which we were taken by shuttle to the Rooftop Terrace Millennium Park! This was an opportunity to meet the representatives of the many different chapters. The atmosphere was one of a celebratory nature. The food was delicious, the music was great and the conversation was even better! It was a great experience to meet and speak with the vast array of professional women representing every branch of the transportation industry. Every woman was happy to meet and network with fellow WTS members old and new.



WTS-NC Triangle Chapter representatives at the International Conference, from left, Rachel Ruiz of HNTB, Jenny Fleming of Ecological Engineering, and Nichette Hill of KCI.

The first full conference day began with the Keynote Panel Discussion on “Women in Rail.” This group of women consisted of leaders and pioneers of the railroad industry who shared their personal and professional challenges as women in a male-dominated profession.



There were also several breakout sessions throughout the conference that you could attend for personal growth, such as “Relationship Building – Making it about them,” featuring speaker Jacqueline Loewe. I attended “There’s Just You, Everybody Else is Taken,” featuring speakers Carla Tillery, the Director of Operations for Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc.; Vasti Amaro, President/CEO of Vasti Transport, Inc., and Hildegard Dodd, Marketing Manager of Wilson Ihrig. This session focused on the personal challenges of each woman and how they overcame them to become the successful women they are today. They spoke on how to maximize your strengths and how to use social media to achieve a successful career.



One of my favorite highlights of the Awards Banquet was watching U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx accept the 2015 WTS Rosa Parks Diversity Award. Secretary Foxx spoke about the importance of women in the in transportation and gave a shout out to his home state of North Carolina.



The Keynote Speaker for Thursday's lunch was none other than the amazing Erin Brockovich. Erin shared with us personal and professional challenges that helped her to succeed. There is definitely more to this dynamic lady than meets the eye.



The “Fly Girl”, Vernice Armor, was a remarkable speaker! Vernice spoke about her life challenges and how she became the first African American Female Combat Pilot for the US Marine Corps. If you need to be motivated to move forward in your personal and professional career, Vernice is the lady to aid in that challenge. I left the lunch super motivated! So motivated that I had to purchase her book.



The three days I spent at the 2015 WTS International Conference was incredible! The experience is one that I will never forget, and I can't wait to attend next year's conference in Dallas, Texas.