

# WTS Houston

## 2019 Annual Report



Advancing Women in Transportation  
Houston Chapter

### Message from the President

- Angela McMurray, Jacobs, WTS Houston President

What a year it has been! Last year was a year of firsts for our Chapter and this year has been a continuation of that growth. I'm pleased to say we are holding at 150 members strong, experiencing continued growth in our Agency Partners program and seeing greater participation in our many professional development programs. The support of our members and generous sponsors has helped to make this all possible.

A few of my favorite spotlights from this year include our sold-out Scholarships and Awards Gala where we honored Carin Patman, Chair Houston METRO as Woman of the year, raised \$15,000 dollars towards our scholarship fund and celebrated some impressive young women as they work towards their future careers in transportation. Our Networking Naturally event was another highlight where we continued our tradition of teaming with other professional organizations to expand our reach in the transportation community. Always a well-attended event, WTS and ASHE members learned practical networking tips and each attendee had the opportunity to get a new professional headshot.

As I approach the end of my term as WTS Houston's Chapter President I cannot help but feel grateful. Grateful for our sponsors that have helped us to award \$20,000 dollars in scholarships for women seeking careers in transportation and the life changing impact of our scholarships for these women. Grateful for our volunteers that have helped us lead our professional development, STEM, and numerous other development programs over the past year. But mostly I'm grateful for the relationships I have developed and leadership and growth opportunities I have experienced from being a part of WTS over the past 10 years. I hope that you enjoy this year's annual report and that it will inspire you to not only continue to support this amazing organization but actively join us in all that our Chapter has to offer.

2019 Young Engineer of the Year Event



2019 WTS Houston Scholarship & Awards Gala



# WE ARE WTS HOUSTON...



## Board of Directors

### President

Angela McMurray, AICP  
Jacobs

### Immediate Past President

Jeanne Bassetti Jullien  
Gorronona Engineering  
Services, Inc.

### Directory of Community

Rhonda Arnold, JD  
Houston Airport System, City  
of Houston

### Vice President

Stephanie Guillot, PE  
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### Director of Programs

Sirisha Pillalamarri, PE, PTP  
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Planners, LLC

### Director of Student Relations

Tracey Aping, MBA  
Williams Brothers Construction  
Co., Inc.

### Treasurer

ReShane Dawn-Fowler, MBA  
Gunda Corporation

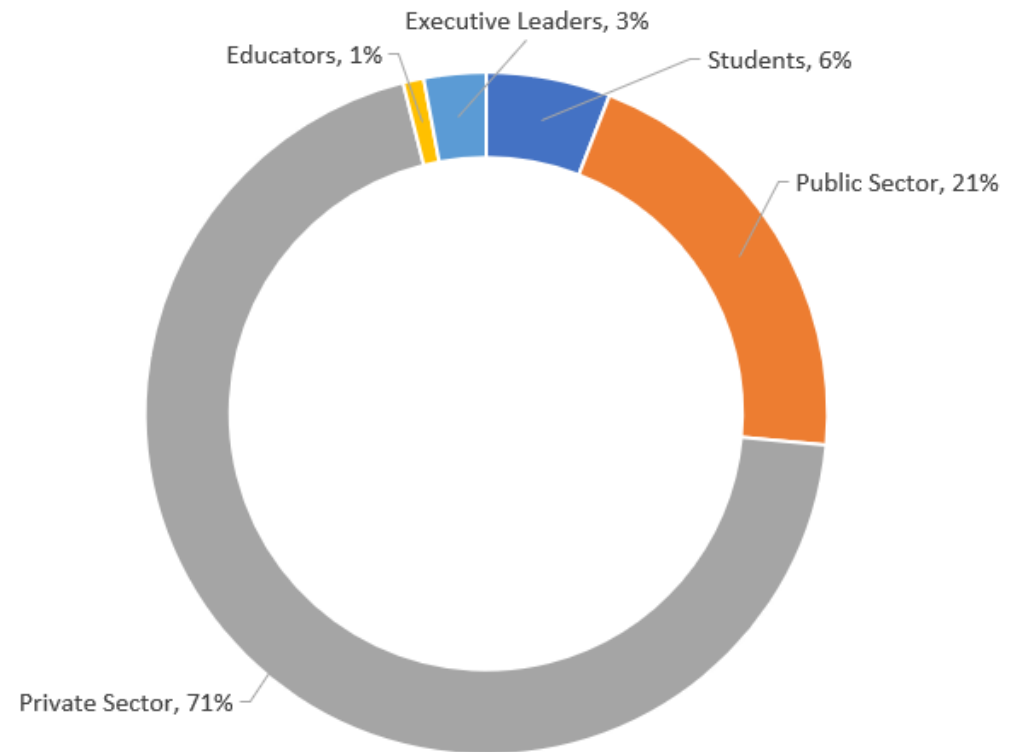
### Interim Director of Membership

Lisa Garner, PE  
Cobb, Fendley & Associates,  
Inc.

### Secretary

Angie Stoddard, PE  
HDR, Inc.

## WTS Houston Membership Profile



**MEMBERSHIP  
RETENTION**

**73%**

**MISSION** To attract, sustain, connect and advance women's careers to strengthen the transportation industry.

# 2019 Event Highlights

## 2019 WTS International Conference



The WTS Houston Chapter had nine members attend the 2019 WTS Annual Conference in Boston, MA. The conference theme was the Hub of Ingenuity and the three day sessions allowed transportation leaders to connect and exchange ideas about the latest developments in the industry. Over 700 corporate and governmental transportation leaders were in attendance, and many thoughtful and engaging topics were covered.

The Houston Chapter was able to award \$4,000 in scholarships to five members for conference attendance. The Chapter also provided a \$1,000 scholarship to a student member, Xiaoyu (Sky) Guo of Texas A&M University.



## 2019 WTS Mid-Career Signature Leadership Training

The WTS Houston Chapter is thrilled to announce that for the first time, three members have been accepted into the prestigious WTS Mid-Career Signature Leadership Training and one member attended the Executive Training in Washington, DC. The three-day training was held in early October and the seminars included debriefing on 360 reviews, networking sessions with the Executive Leadership attendees and strength finder sessions.



### Houston WTS Leadership Training Attendees

Left to right: Stephanie Guillot, Amanda Araj, Eliza Paul, Lisa Garner



Amanda Araj, PE  
Sr. Engineer, WSP



Lisa Garner, PE  
Sr. Associate, Cobb Fendley &  
Associates



Stephanie Guillot, PE  
Sr. Transportation Planner, AECOM



Eliza Paul, PE  
Deputy District Engineer, TxDOT

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



## Escape Room Activity

Left to right: Victoria Mota, Eagle Tang, Monisha



## Salary Negotiation Panel

Left to right: Eagle Tang, Claire Gui, Peijia Tang, and panelist Roma Stevens

By Monisha Khurana, Goodman Corporation, WTS Mentorship Chair

The WTS Houston Chapter's Mentorship Program, led by Monisha Khurana and Victoria Mota, is in its second year. The program focuses on professional development and growth for all participants, mentors and mentees alike. Mentors, who include mid-level and senior transportation professionals, are matched with mentees, who are mid-level and junior WTS members. Mentors and mentees meet individually for one hour every month over the duration of the program (April to October), and mentees attend monthly group events.

During the course of the year, the Mentorship Program hosted two professional development panels. In May, the Mentorship Program hosted a career panel. Featured panelists included Sirisha Pillalamarri (WTS Houston Director of Programs and Principal at Transcend Engineers & Planners), ReShane Dawn-Fowler (WTS Houston Treasurer and Marketing Manager at the Gunda Corporation) and Anita Hollmann (Regional Planning Manager at H-GAC). The panelists spoke about their career paths, strategies for time management, networking tips, and answered mentees questions about how to navigate a career in the transportation industry.

In August, Roma Stevens, President of Stevens Technical Services, spoke about salary negotiation. She led a discussion about self-advocacy in the workplace, giving concrete tips on how to approach conversations and instilling confidence in the mentees to go forth and ask for what they deserve. Mentees had the opportunity to discuss their own experiences as well and learn from each other.

The Mentorship Program encourages participation in the WTS Houston Chapter's Soft Skills Workshops, including the Networking Naturally and Public Speaking workshops held by the Chapter this summer. Other activities organized by the Mentorship program included a kickoff meeting in April, where all program participants had the opportunity to meet each other, an Escape Room activity in July, and small group lunches in September. The program will conclude with a graduation celebration lunch in October.

The WTS Houston's Mentorship program is seeking interested mentees and mentors for 2020 – if you are interested, please reach out to Monisha Khurana or Victoria Mota for more information!

# ANNUAL AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIP GALA

## Award Winners

WTS Houston honored their award and scholarship winners at the annual WTS Scholarship and Awards Gala held on Friday, March 29, 2019 at the Houston Club. While we all love the location and the stunning views of downtown Houston, we have outgrown the space and will be looking at alternate venues for the 2020 Gala.

Laura Ryan, Texas Transportation Commissioner, was the keynote speaker at the gala. Laura was the 2018 WTS Houston Woman of the Year!

The chapter presented seven awards this year to remarkable individuals. We had record breaking attendance and the chapter was able to raise over \$15,000 from the live and silent auctions.

We would be remiss if we did not give a huge thank you to Binkely and Barfield for their generous donation and Commissioner Cagle for his assistance in our first ever live Auction!

### 2019 WTS Houston Award Winners

#### WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Carin Patman, Chair  
*Houston METRO*

*Corporation*

#### YOUNG ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

Liza Amar, AICP, EI  
*CDM Smith*

#### HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD (MAN OF THE YEAR)

Quincy Allen, PE  
*TxDOT*

#### EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

Harris County Engineering Department

#### ROSA PARKS DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Dr. Carol Lewis  
*Texas Southern University*

#### INNOVATIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTION AWARD

Roadway Flood Warning System,  
TranStar and Harris County Judge's Office  
Dinah Massie  
*TranStar*

#### MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Monisha Khurana, AICP  
*The Goodman*



# ANNUAL AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIP GALA

## Scholarship Winners

### 2019 WTS Houston Scholarship Winners

#### HELENE M. OVERLY MEMORIAL

Farinoush Sharifi, PhD.  
*Texas A&M University*

#### SHARON D BANKS MEMORIAL

Samantha Vail  
*Texas A&M University*

#### TRANSPORTATION YOU

Nicole Mut  
*Lamar High School*

Madeline Demny  
*Magnolia High School*

By Kathy Phillips, Contract Land Staff, Scholarship Chair

On March 29, 2019 WTS Houston awarded scholarships to Farinoush Sharifi, Samantha Vail, Nicole Mut, and Madeline Demny. With the start of a new school year, we thought you would like to know how these awardees were impacted by their scholarship.

Farinoush Sharifi indicates that she is truly blessed to be the recipient of the Helene M. Overly Memorial Scholarship. She continues working on her PH.D. degree in Transportation Engineering at Texas A&M and is expected to graduate in 2021. She is also a graduate assistant researcher with a focus on the application of the advanced methods and data analytic tools to address the impacts of new technologies in the transportation industry. The scholarship helped reduce her financial stress so she can concentrate more on her dissertation. She feels the scholarship boosted her confidence and highlighted her achievements. The generosity of WTS Houston has inspired her to help fellow women students in the future through WTS.

Sharon D. Banks Scholarship recipient Samantha Vail graduated in May from Texas A&M with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. The scholarship helped pay for her last semester of college. She is the first person in her family to graduate from college! After graduation she was hired full time with Jacobs in Dallas as an EIT on their Transportation Team. She is working on roadway/highway design projects and learning more about traffic engineering. She says the WTS Houston Gala was empowering and was amazed by the number of women leading in their various industries. She has started attending the WTS Dallas meetings and is working on getting a membership. She thanks WTS Houston for its generosity, support and for helping her accomplish a major feat that will impact generations in her family!

Nicole Mut was accepted at Washington University in St. Louis and is majoring in chemical engineering. The Transportation You scholarship freed up money in her budget to purchase a laptop and textbooks. With her parents sending 2 children to college (remember she has a twin, Michelle) the WTS Houston scholarship was a blessing. Attending the Gala left her feeling empowered. It also demonstrated to her how important women in places of power need to actively lift up other women.

Madeline Demny is enrolled as a Freshman at Texas A&M University to study Chemical Engineering. She was amazed by the WTS Houston Gala and the professional women she met. She says the women were inspirational and helped open her eyes to the variety of careers in transportation. The Transportation You scholarship enabled her to purchase a very necessary computer and paid for some of her tuition. She is truly thankful for WTS Houston's support and encouragement.



# Student Chapter Highlight

## WTS Texas A&M Student Chapter

WTS-TAMU endorses the objectives of WTSI to promote the advancement of women in the transportation industry. The chapter provides supplemental education about the professional practice of transportation-related work by inviting distinguished lecturers, developing a leadership training event, and a mentoring program. This student chapter has been established in April 2017 and is a recognized student chapter within Texas A&M University. Academic Year 2018-2019 was the second year of WTS TAMU and our activity within the campus has grown since then. What makes WTS-TAMU unique to the university is our dedication to the advancement of women in transportation. We include women of multiple disciplines such as civil engineering, computer engineering, urban planners and environmental professionals.

Membership in this organization is open to all enrolled students at Texas A&M. Being a student member provides the chance to attend WTS-TAMU meetings, WTS leadership conferences, networking events and apply for scholarships. WTS-TAMU has 123 members currently enrolled in our student chapter. University wide and department specific recruitment events (3 events were held last year) helped WTS-TAMU in having improved membership.

For the academic year August 2018 – August 2019, WTS-TAMU conducted 3 technical general meetings. General

meetings are held to make members aware of the industry. Last year WTS-TAMU followed the theme “towards a student leadership summit” for its activities. The general meetings catered to that theme by connecting our members to professionals in the area of leadership development and transportation research. Members were encouraged to ask questions at the end of a one-hour session. All the meetings had attendance ranging from 15-25 students. Apart from the technical meetings, four leadership programs were taken up – including a seminar, communication workshop, resume review event and a salary negotiation workshop.

WTS-TAMU encourages student participation not only via technical meetings but also by social events. We celebrated International Women’s Day with the theme “Balance for Better”. The chapter leadership talked about WTS-TAMU and asked students to write down a woman role model that they admire. The keyword, “Mother”, was listed as the highest among all. A fundraising dinner was successfully hosted in J. Cody’s Steak and Barbeque. WTS-TAMU student leadership, members, as well as some researchers in Texas A&M Transportation Institute joined for the event.

Farinoush Sharifi, the president of WTS-TAMU student chapter at the time, attended the annual WTS Houston Scholarship and Awards Gala to receive Helen M. Overly Memorial Scholarship. Xiaoyu “Sky” Guo, the vice-president

of WTS-TAMU student chapter attended 2019 WTS International Meeting in Boston, MA from May 15-17 as a Houston Chapter Student Representative. She was supported by WTS Houston Chapter and Dr. Beverly Kuhn, WTS-TAMU advisor.

The annual donation from WTS-Houston is the primary income source of the chapter. The increased number of participants over the last one year can be considered as a factor that proves the quality and relevance of events conducted by WTS-TAMU. WTS-TAMU is grateful for the support they received so far from different sources. This year they plan to use it towards the events that would increase their reach.



## 2019 WTS Houston Committee Chairs

### PROGRAMS CHAIR

Courtney Blechle - HNTB

### CORPORATE PARTNERS CHAIR

Liza Amar - CDM Smith

### AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIP EVENT CHAIR

Melissa Fontenot - Cypress Environmental Consulting

### DIVERSITY CHAIR

Ashley Jones - Moore Archeological Consulting, Inc

### STEM & TRANSPORTATION YOU

Agueda Guerra, PE - Jacobs

### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Thalia Izela Gonzalez - Jacobs

### SCHOLARSHIPS CHAIR

Kathy Phillips - Contract Land Staff

### COMMUNICATIONS CHAIRS

Aimee Trawick - Halff & Associates

Susan Patterson - Cox McLain Environmental

### MENTORSHIP CHAIR

Monisha Khurana, AICP - The Goodman Corporation

### HOSPITALITY CHAIR

Courtney Carr - MBCO Engineering, LLC

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHAIR

Paola Betancourt - Cobb, Fendley & Associates, Inc.

### STUDENT CHAPTER CHAIR

Tina Liu, PE - Harris County

# STEM EVENTS

## Girls in STEM Conference

By Suzanna Set, PE, Midtown Engineers

WTS Houston Chapter STEM Committee participated at the second annual Girls in STEM Conference, which was held at Alief Taylor High School on Saturday, October 5, 2019. STEM Committee Chair, Agueda Guerra was joined by the its Committee members: Sruthi Ashraf, Amma Cobbinah, Sky Guo and Suzanna Set.

The Committee presented “*What’s Your Sign?*”, which introduced students to roadway signages. The students learned about the meaning and the importance of the different types and colors of signs that are found on the streets and major roadways, purpose of the signs, and the need for retro-reflectivity and angle of reflections. After the presentation, each student made their own sign and looked through small sample of retro-reflective signing sheets with a mini-microscope.

The STEM Committee presented three sessions during conference, one in the morning and two in the afternoon, each session had 20 - 25 students of ages 10 - 13. Each session was interactive and students asked the presenters questions about transportation engineering and college in general. Although many of the signs designed were not be in compliance with the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Device (MUTCD), but students displayed creative with their design and had lots of fun creating them.

The students were enthusiastic throughout the sessions and were asking questions. Their major take-aways were:

- ◇ Existence of brown and purple signs
- ◇ The signs are not shiny because of the metal plates or lights
- ◇ Shape and color of signs matter

Students and volunteers all had a great time. We look forward to teaming up with Girlstart in this conference again and other future events!



## 2019 WTS DC Summit

By Agueda Guerra, PE, CDM Smith

I had the privilege of participating on the 8th annual Transportation YOU DC Summit this past June 2019 as the mentor of Paola Gomez. Paola is senior at YES Prep Academy in the Gulfton campus and she was selected to represent WTS Houston at the summit. Paola is an excellent student with great potential and a passion for math and science. She has a GPA of 4.11 and counts with very supporting parents and excellent recommendations from her teachers and school. Additionally, Paola was awarded the Lea+Elliot scholarship, which is awarded to only one of the students attending the summit. This scholarship is meant to cover the registration fee and accommodations for the mentee.

Paola and I had a very empowering experience sharing 5 days packed full of activities with another 25 mentor/mentee pairs from all over the country. We had the opportunity of touring the Capitol building and participate in a Congressional panel. We went sightseeing the monuments at the National Mall while racing to win the Transportation YOU Amazing Race competition. We also visited the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center where we learned about their research on smart intersections, driverless vehicles, and bike safety, and visited their material and crash labs.

A very important part of the student’s experience at the summit was their Challenge Project. We were part of the Train Team. Students had to collect data at an intersection, run a level of service analysis and make a presentation about their findings. This exercise forced the students to work together, solve problems, and make decisions. I believe good friendships were form among the Train Team members as a result of this exercise. I personally was very impressed and proud of the final product the presented and the hard work they put into this activity.

We also had a visit to USDOT, met FHWA Administrator Nicole Nason, and received a message from USDOT Secretary Elaine Chao. We toured the Ronald Reagan Airport and George Washington University, and finally attended the closing banquet where students received their certificate of attendance and the prizes for their Amazing Race performance. Our Team won the prize for the best Transportation You jingle.

This experience, although exhausting, was inspirational and empowering for both the mentor and the mentee. We were very lucky to have this amazing experience.

*I want to say thank you to WTS-Houston for giving me the opportunity to go to Washington, DC and experience things that I never would've experienced otherwise. I learned so many things about transportation. People don't consider the many different details that are necessary in order to make any sort of transportation function. I was able to meet so many great people and make connections that I know will help me in the future. I am truly grateful that I was able to attend the summit.*  
—Paola Gomez



# WTS HOUSTON 2019 PROGRAMS

## 2019 Programs

January	Luncheon	Barbara Russell, Harris County and Dinah Massie, Houston TranStar
February	Luncheon	Caroline Mays, TxDOT Freight Planning Update
March	Gala	Annual Scholarships & Awards Gala
April	Luncheon	Liliana Rambo, Hobby Airport
May	Luncheon	METRONext Updates by Edmund Petry
June	Soft Skills Series	Networking Naturally with Lisa Caughorn
July	Soft Skills Series	How to Use Your Inside Voice with Donna Barbee
August	Luncheon	City of Houston Planning Update with Margaret Wallace Brown
September	Luncheon	Automated Vehicle TSU Shuttle with Dr. Carol Lewis
September	Chapter Meeting	Annual Chapter Meeting
September	Lattes & Leaders	Insight from Stephanie Nellons-Paige
October	Luncheon	North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Update with Denetia Robinson
November	Luncheon	Annual Diversity Event



# CORPORATE PARTNERS

## 2019 WTS Houston Financial Statement January - October 2019

### REVENUE

Annual Awards Gala	\$23,060.00
Membership	\$6,723.77
Monthly Programs	\$8,698.24
Corporate Sponsorship	\$47,500.00
WTS Foundation Income (Gala Silent Auction)	\$7,975.00
Other	\$122.88
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$94,079.89</b>

### EXPENDITURES

Annual Awards Gala	\$16,129.80
Operating Expenses	\$9,500.16
Membership	\$13,025.64
Mentorship Program	\$465.57
Monthly Programs	\$14,276.03
WTSI Conferences	\$10,007.10
Corporate Sponsorship	\$397.20
STEM Committee	\$3,296.76
WTS Foundation Allocation	\$32,975.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$100,073.26</b>

### NET REVENUE

**-\$5,993.37**

TITANIUM	   
PLATINUM	   
GOLD	    Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group 
DIAMOND	    
AGENCY	  
SILVER	        
SMALL BUSINESS	          
IN-KIND	

Our corporate and agency sponsors help WTS Houston underwrite programs, STEM events, scholarships and professional development opportunities. **Their generous financial support allows WTS Houston to continue to promote our mission and expand our reach in the local transportation industry.**

We are thankful to our Corporate Partners Chair, Liza Amar, who continues to grow and increase our annual sponsorships while also increasing the number of sponsoring firms and agencies.

Liza and the 2019 WTS Houston Board of Directors wish to thank all of the corporate and agency partners who gave so generously to help our chapter further its mission.

