



2021 VOLUME 3

September 30, 2021

HOT Chapter Newsletter



> Heart of Texas

Advancing women
Advancing transportation

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PRESIDENT’S LETTER

As the summer of 2021 comes to a close, and I reflect back on all that the chapter has accomplished this quarter, I am amazed. As you read through this newsletter, keep an eye out for the recap of our latest virtual events.

We wrapped up another successful Lattes and Leadership series—we plan to continue the expanded schedule of these next year—hopefully in person. Our monthly lunches continued in July and August with more to come in the fall. The programs committee is already beginning to plan for next year’s speakers and will be asking for input from everyone to help us perfect our program.

We hosted our 17th annual gala in August with another amazing round of fundraising for our scholarships. We celebrated our chapter award winners and recognized our scholarship recipients. I am truly grateful to all of the donors, sponsors, and those who watched the event. You are helping us make a difference in the future, especially for young women pursuing careers in transportation. A HUGE thank you to our gala team, including our chair Brittani Kaim, for planning and making sure we had a successful and entertaining virtual event.

In September we held our 14th Annual Professional Development Seminar, “Deep in the Heart of Texas Transportation: Connecting Plans and Projects to the People They Serve.” This two-morning virtual event was very informative and I hope everyone who attended learned some new things and took away some new ideas.

As we move into the remaining months of 2021, we hope the worst of the pandemic will be behind us soon and are beginning to explore moving back to in-person events. Now is a great time to get involved! Please reach out to the individual committee chairs, or anyone on the executive board, and we will get you connected!

If you have any questions about WTS or the HOT Chapter, please do not hesitate to contact me or anyone else on our board. Wishing everyone a continued happy, healthy, and safe 2021 and hope to see you all in person again soon!

All the best!

Ashley Williams



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CORPORATE SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Lauren Osborne, ATG

Lauren Osborne is a Transportation Planner, who is gifted in graphic design, excels at visual communication, enjoys collaborating with peers and clients alike, and is interested in learning new skills and working on different types of projects. She has been involved with WTS on many levels from monthly luncheons to annual galas and actively participates in the mentoring program. Lauren has had the opportunity to work on projects that focus on various aspects of transportation, including Metropolitan Plans, Transit Development Plan, Active Transportation Plan, and Mobility Master Plans. From her time traveling abroad, Lauren utilizes her experience with human-focused transportation systems to inspire her contributions and insight to projects.

Lauren shared, “So far, the most enjoyable aspect of my career has been learning a variety of new skills and working on different types of projects. Transportation is a broad subject and provides many opportunities to positively impact communities and the lives of individuals and seeing the results of your work come to fruition in the real world can be very rewarding.”



Abril Matysek, CDM Smith

Abril Matysek is a new professional and transportation planner with CDM Smith. She joined Women’s Transportation Seminar (WTS) International and the Heart of Texas Chapter in 2018. Since then, she has served on the Mentorship Committee, volunteered with Girl Day at UT Austin, and helped review scholarship applications. It was because of her active engagement that she was nominated for the 2018 Member of the Year award for the HOT chapter.

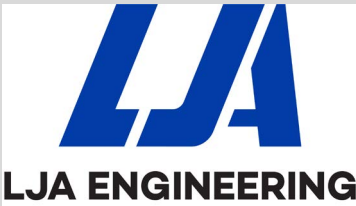
Abril believes that involvement in organizations like WTS is critical to professional growth. “Getting to know other women and learning from more seasoned professionals is important to me,” she said. “I love hearing their experiences and finding ways to apply best practices in my own life.” Based in Austin, TX, Abril began her career in 2016 as an intern with CDM Smith’s toll practice before later joining the team full-time. Her work includes traffic and revenue studies, corridor studies, and traffic modeling assignments for a variety of projects. Most recently, she successfully completed the U.S. 69 Traffic & Revenue Study for the Kansas Department of Transportation.

CDM Smith is committed to advancing women professionals and diligently works to strengthen diversity and inclusion. Programs such as the Reboot Program, a 16-week career re-entry program, is just one of the ways we demonstrate this. We are regular sponsors of WTS, National Society of Black Engineers, Society of Women Engineers, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and the Society of Military Engineers, and continue to invest in internal programs such as Working Parents Network, Women’s Forum and Leadership Network, and the Young Professionals Forum. It is because of these programs and more that, in 2020, we were recognized as an AEC Advisor Diversity Index firm for race and gender and received the employer of the year award from three WTS Chapters (Kansas City, Florida Capital Area Chapter, and Connecticut).



Carol Bellinger, SR/WA, R/W-RAC LJA Engineering

Carol has over 36 years of comprehensive experience in Right of Way (ROW) project management, negotiations, residential and business acquisition and relocation, risk management, asset management, property management and managing large-scale complex public infrastructure improvement projects, and capital improvement and street improvement projects.



In 2018, LJA began providing real estate consulting and ROW services for government, public agencies, utility companies, and railroads. Led by Carol Bellinger, the LJA ROW team of professionals specialize in providing innovative real estate and ROW services for transportation projects throughout Texas. We are proud of our ROW division at LJA.

A former WTS Member at the Pennsylvania and Chicago chapters, Carol was an active member at both chapters. She presented on challenges women face today versus when she started in the industry at the Pennsylvania chapter. She was also involved as a mentor in the mentorship program at the Chicago chapter. She currently continues to mentor women in LJA Engineering’s in-house group, WAVE (Women, Advancement, and Voices in Engineering). WAVE at LJA seeks to provide a platform of educational, leadership, and development programs for women throughout the stages of a career lifecycle in an engineering environment. Our goal is to encourage and support women while recognizing their achievements and challenges they often face entering and progressing in the engineering workforce. Our objective is to connect women and provide resources and skills to empower, engage, and educate women.



Julia Harrod, MWM DesignGroup

MWM is a multi-discipline firm providing civil engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, permitting and surveying services to Central Texas. MWM supports and encourages ALL of its team to develop as we have grown the firm. MWM is proud of our 30% organic growth in staff over the past two years, with over half of those hires being women. We are always looking for top talent that will enhance our culture.

In order to maintain company culture and support, encourage and further develop her staff, Julia started a continuous improvement program that provides a staff development coach for all employees. “This is critical to our success and foundation as a firm, and it stands us apart from our competition,” President and CEO Julia Harrod, PE, F.NSPE shared in an interview with PSMJ Resources. “Engaging a coach enables us to live up to our tenant of ‘helping each other do our best work’ and promotes our culture of continuous improvement.”

MWM is proud to support WTS along with other organizations that promote equitable professional development.

Anamaria Torre, Stantec

Stantec has made numerous steps to support the advancement of women within the firm and industry. Women@Stantec is an employee resource group supporting the advancement of women with chapters across the globe. In the United States, Stantec has launched the Career Empowerment Pilot Program, offering 45 women the opportunity to receive three months of training and group coaching to help identify career goals and set simple strategies to put them into action. WTS International recognized Stantec as 2021 Employer of the Year for advancing professional development opportunities, supporting WTS through membership events and volunteer positions, and encouraging women to enter the transportation field through community organizations, youth programs, and partnerships. Stantec is proud to be a WTS HOT Chapter Silver Sponsor and WTS International Advocate Partner.



WTS HOT Chapter Member Anamaria Torres, P.E., PTOE, has over eight years of technical experience in the private and public sector transportation design and traffic engineering projects in both Illinois and Texas. Anamaria is currently the lead designer for the Stantec traffic engineering team in Texas with significant contributions to the Loop I-375 Border Highway West Extension in El Paso, Texas, and SH288 Toll Lanes Project in Houston, Texas. She also designed the traffic signals and pedestrian hybrid beacons for the University of Texas at Austin Red River Street Realignment that is currently underway. Anamaria serves as a mentor with WTS HOT Transportation YOU and was a mentee with the 2019 WTS HOT Mentorship Program. Anamaria is also very active with ITE and recently graduated from the LeadershipITE program. She was also named the TexITE 2021 Younger Member of the Year, and she serves as a member of the ITE STEM Committee and as 2nd Vice Chair for the LeadershipITE planning committee.

2021 WTS HEART OF TEXAS CHAPTER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The chapter's mentorship program is back for its third year. We look forward to seeing these young women pursue their interests!

The 2021 Mentorship Program is well underway! The most recent virtual luncheon featured Shannon Swank, co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer of PlusPass, discussing the all-important topic of work/life balance.

She shared her wisdom about how she maintains her work life balance. She likened it to a buffet – you choose what you put on your plate. Prioritize the things you want to make fit on your plate. If your priorities change, you can always change what you're giving space to on your plate. She reminded us all that mental and body health are key to maintaining balance.



Many thanks to our executive board sponsors, Ashely Williams and Tonia Norman. If you have any questions or are interested in being a mentor or mentee for the 2022 program, please reach out to [Sylvia Shelton](#).

2021-2022 SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

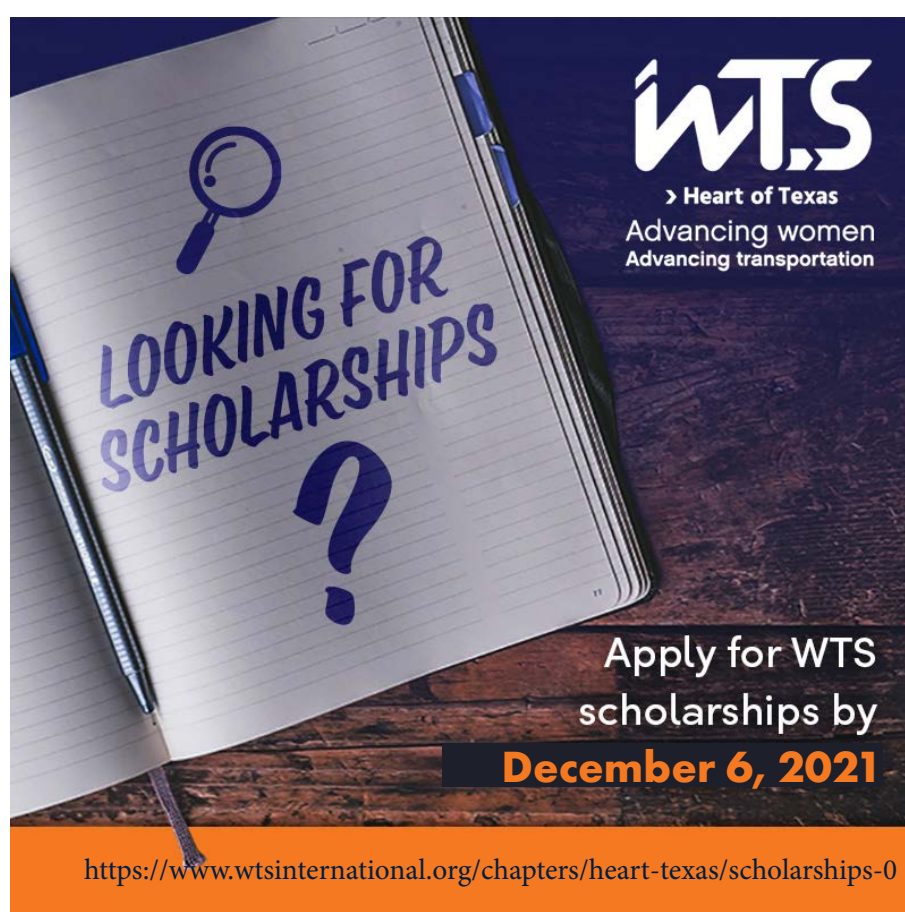
To encourage women pursuing careers in transportation, the WTS HOT Chapter is awarding scholarships to young women in junior college/technical school, undergraduate or graduate programs as well as to seniors in high school. Through these scholarships, WTS aims to support young women in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematic (STEM) related field that would contribute to the advancement of the transportation industry. Check out our website for more information on requirements and deadlines:

APPLY [HERE!](#)

Completed applications must be received electronically or in hard copy form no later than December 6, 2021, to:

WTS Heart of Texas Chapter
Scholarship Chair
P.O. Box 27331
Austin, Texas 78755

[Adeliza Ramirez](#)



The graphic features a dark blue background with a wooden texture at the bottom. On the left, a magnifying glass is positioned over an open notebook. The notebook page has the text "LOOKING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, followed by a large blue question mark. On the right side of the graphic, the WTS logo is displayed in white, with the text "> Heart of Texas Advancing women Advancing transportation" below it. At the bottom right, the text "Apply for WTS scholarships by" is written in white, followed by "December 6, 2021" in a bold, orange font. At the very bottom, a URL is provided in white text on an orange background.

<https://www.wtsinternational.org/chapters/heart-texas/scholarships-0>



This month WTS HOT put on the 14th Annual Professional Development Seminar (PDS). Over 90 participants joined on the first day and over 60 participants attended this year’s second PDS day, which took place virtually on the mornings of September 16 and 17. On Thursday morning, the theme was “Deep in the Heart of Texas Transportation: Connecting Plans and Projects to the People They Serve.” During the first session, which was moderated by **Caroline Bailey** with GrantWorks, three speakers shared about their diverse and meaningful work making transportation systems accessible for all ages and abilities: **Coleen Gentles** with the City of Austin Safe Routes to School Program, **John Petrous** with Tappy Guide, and **Stephanie Lane** with Drive a Senior-ATX. The second session was an informative presentation about the history and current practices of NEPA, which was led by **Lisa Loftus-Otway** (University of Texas Center for Transportation Research) and included **Ryan Collins** (CAMPO), **Shirley Nichols** (TxDOT), and **Ashley McLain** (Cox|McLain). The final session of Day 1 focused on best practices for effective public engagement; first, **Caroline Mays** (TxDOT), **Giacomo Yaquinto** (TxDOT), and **Kelli Reyna** (HDR Engineering) shared about the outreach strategies that made the bi-national Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan successful. **Arin Gray** with CD&P then shared a collection of innovative strategies for thoughtfully engaging underserved populations and rural property owners.

On Friday morning, the theme of the day was “Negotiating the New Normal: Skills and Lessons Learned for Managing Work and Relationships.” First, **JaNette Bridgewater** with Freese and Nichols moderated a lively panel of leaders in the private



and public sectors who shared how they’ve learned to build company culture and keep their teams efficient in the midst of the pandemic. The panelists – **Rich McMonagle** with TxDOT, **Joe Cantalupo** with K Friese + Associates, and **Tyler Milligan** with Milligan Partners – discussed the importance of extending empathy to employees as they navigate a variety of losses and challenges, and the value of trust, transparency, and adaptability during difficult times. The day wrapped up with an interactive networking workshop led by **Hon Lam** with the Texas McCombs School of Business; Hon shared tips and tricks for making memorable connections (even when we’re connecting virtually!) that are built on common ground and authenticity.

A common thread throughout the PDS was remembering the “human element” in our work in the transportation industry. Whether our days consist of designing crosswalks, achieving NEPA compliance, conducting public outreach, or managing teams, we were challenged to remember that everyone in our spheres of influence deserves empathy, care, and connection.

CORPORATE SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Ashley Davison, Kimley-Horn

Ashley Davison P.E., is an active member of WTS and has more than eight years of roadway design experience at Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. Upon graduation from Texas Tech University, Ashley worked in the Kimley-Horn Lubbock office for five years before transferring to the Kimley-Horn Austin office in 2018. Ashley not only continuously strives to help grow the roadway discipline in Austin, but she also serves as a mentor and role model for younger women on her team and throughout the office. Ashley has served as Kimley-Horn Austin’s women’s leadership champion for two years. In this role, she organizes events focused on topics women face in the workplace and works to foster a strong community among Kimley-Horn women in the Austin office.

Kimley-Horn has many great resources and programs for women specifically, one of them being “LIFT” (Lasting Impact for Tomorrow). LIFT is an initiative to recruit, develop, and retain women in engineering and planning at Kimley-Horn, increasing the number of successful women consultants, and helping its women reach their full potential. This initiative also provides a way for women in the firm to communicate with one another and discuss how they handle the growing pains of work-life balance. Whether you are newly married, a new mom, or struggling with the transitions from school to work, this initiative empowers women, supports them, and celebrates their achievements.



AWARD WINNERS

INNOVATIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS



Erika Kemp, Texas
Department
of Transportation

ROSA PARKS DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP



Capitol Metro
Project Connect



MEMBER OF THE YEAR



Brianna Frey

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR



WINNER

HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD AWARD



Joe Cantalupo

WOMAN OF THE YEAR



Jackie Nirenberg

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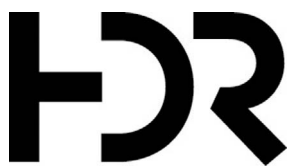
Blazin



Scorchin



Spicy



HOT



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Alexa Minchaca
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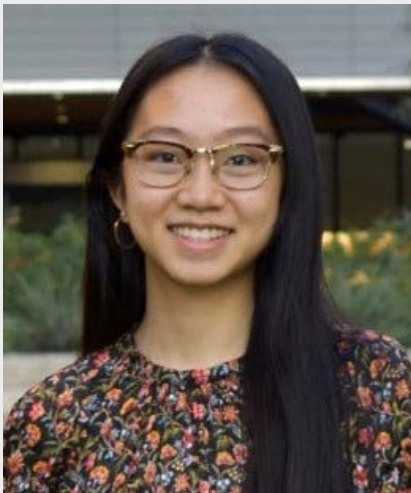
Lynn Isaak
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*Transportation YOU
Scholarship*



Maria Bassil
*Helene M.
Overly Memorial
Scholarship*



Kaitlyn Ng
*Banks Memorial
Undergraduate
Scholarship*



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Yuliana Castillo-Zapata
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JULY LUNCHEON
Jason JonMichael, City of Austin Transportation Department

Jason JonMichael from the City of Austin Transportation Department discussed the rise of vertically integrated micro-mobility companies and understanding M&A (mergers & acquisitions) activity in the transportation field.



AUGUST LUNCHEON
Ashby Johnson, Executive Director for CAMPO

In August we had Ashby Johnson, Executive Director for CAMPO, talk about the adoption of the regional plan, 2045 Transportation Plan with an update on the IH-35 Capital Express Project and others.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE OCTOBER VIRTUAL LUNCH MEETING
Jacqueline Yaft, City of Austin City’s Department of Aviation

Please join us this October Lunch Virtual meeting for a presentation and conversation with Jacqueline Yaft about Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) and the future of AUS post Covid.

CORPORATE SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Vicki Ortega, K Frieese + Associates



Vicki Ortega, PE, a WTS HOT member and previous chapter Program Chair and Treasurer, is an Associate at K Frieese + Associates (KFA). Based in KFA’s Round Rock office, Vicki provides technical and management expertise on water, wastewater, drainage, water quality, and transportation projects throughout Central Texas. In recent years, her work has focused on leading drainage design for major regional transportation projects, including TxDOT’s Capital Express South as well as the 183A Tollway Phase III and Manor Expressway Phase III for the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority. In addition, she has worn multiple hats in municipal engineering roles for communities like Cedar Park, Hutto, New Braunfels, and West Lake Hills, where she has helped create and streamline processes for development reviews and policy updates. Her keen eye for detail, incredible depth of knowledge, and sharp organizational skills have also allowed Vicki to become a Quality Control/Quality Assurance (QA/QC) Lead within KFA, providing reviews on numerous project submittals and contributing to the ongoing refinement of QA/QC processes and procedures.

Vicki’s leadership within the company extends to being a founding member of the Steering Committee of KFA’s “Women Engineers Group,” an internal initiative established to provide opportunities for connection, roundtable discussion, guest speakers, and learning opportunities to women engineers at all experience levels. At KFA, we like to say we are not only woman-owned, but woman-powered, as more than 40% of our technical staff are women. We actively provide professional development and promote a sense of community for all of our team members.

Vicki is a native Austinite, a UT graduate, and the proud mother of two daughters. She’s a strong proponent of giving back to her community and leading by example; she not only served as the WTS HOT Programs chair from 2012 to 2014 and the Treasurer from 2014 to 2018, but she also frequently volunteers at various community events. KFA is proud to highlight Vicki’s professional accomplishments as one of the leaders of our firm.

Learn more about Vicki at: <https://kfrieese.com/about/our-people/victoria-ortega/>
Firm Website: www.kfrieese.com



Lattes & Leadership

Lattes and Leadership is finished for 2021 and will resume by March 2022

As we finalize our guest speakers for the year’s program, we would love insight from our Membership. Please reach out to Heidi Corcoran, Professional Development Chair, at profdev@wtshotchapter.org.

JULY LATTES AND LEADERSHIP

Diane Jones, Lea + Elliott Inc.



On July 8th, Diane L. Woodend Jones, AIA, AICP, joined WTS HOT for a virtual Lattes & Leadership event. She shared with WTS HOT members about her wide range of experiences working in transportation and aviation, beginning at the DFW International Airport. Also, a Trustee on the Mineta Transportation Institute Board and a Director on the Board of the Eno Center for Transportation, Diane explained what it’s looked like for her to grow into leadership roles and serve on boards to champion strategic planning initiatives. She encouraged us to leave our natural self-doubt behind and confidently bring our authentic selves to every task we complete, even the ones that intimidate us at first.

Diane is the Chairman of the Board, Executive Vice President, and Principal of Lea+Elliott, Inc., an internationally recognized transit vehicle and systems engineering firm. Recently, Diane served as Chair of the WTS Association Board of Directors and managed the organization during the absence of a CEO and development of a five-year Strategic Plan.

AUGUST LATTES AND LEADERSHIP

Sereniah Breland, City of Pflugerville

Sereniah Breland, the City Manager of Pflugerville, was our featured speaker. She shared her experience in being a woman leader and the challenges that women face in overcoming both societal and personal barriers. Sereniah encouraged the participants to step beyond our self-imposed barriers and do what you would do if you weren’t afraid of what others will think about you. Act out of your integrity. Resist the default of women always trying to be nice, especially when doing so could lead to lowered standards. She challenged us to relate to our colleagues beyond the work. She suggested that we don’t have to show up to every fight that we are invited to. If you do show up for the fight, it’s okay to be engaged in it fully. All the while, know who loves you, which will allow you to let others’ comments or actions not affect you as much. Sereniah encouraged women to bring their chair to the table and take their seat at the table.



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