

# WTSCFL Newsletter

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Advancing women  
Advancing transportation  
> Central Florida

*PRESIDENT: Snehal Ambare, PE  
VICE PRESIDENT: IVANNIA BOK, PMP®-  
SECRETARY: Kelda Senior  
TREASURER: Nancy Clements, PE  
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: Amy Windom, PE*

JUNE 2022 | QUARTER 2

## President's Message

Hello Central Florida transportation community,

I am thrilled to share our latest newsletter. Your WTS Central Florida Chapter has had another productive quarter.

Chapter leadership continues to keep our goals for the year in front of us as we work to continue to deliver value to our membership and impact the community.

These goals include:

- Attracting, sustaining, connecting and advancing the transportation profession
- Promoting diversity and inclusion with intentionality
- Growing our membership
- Establishing the WTS Central Florida Innovation and Advisory Council

We invite you to join us on this journey of advancing women in the transportation industry. You can support by becoming a sponsor, attending an event or simply following and engaging with us on [social media](#).

We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you soon!

*Snehal Ambare*  
2022 President, WTS Central Florida



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# President's Updates

WTS Central Florida is excited to announce the chapter's newly established Innovation and Advisory Council.

This Council assembles local leaders in public and private sector transportation to advocate for the advancement of women in the transportation industry.

We are honored to welcome Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (GOAA) Kevin Thibault, as our inaugural Council members.

We are grateful for these leaders' unwavering support of WTS Central Florida over the years.

Stay tuned to our website and social media to learn more about the chapter's Innovation and Advisory Council, and future announcements of additional Council members.





# President's Updates

WTS Central Florida leadership was honored to not only attend the 2022 Annual WTS Conference, but our chapter also provided sponsorship to two members - Negaar Minaei and Lilli O'Steen!


Check out Negaar and Lilli's social posts below. Stay tuned to our social media to hear more about their experience.



 **Lilli O'Steen** • 2nd  
Roadway Engineer at WGI  
1mo • 📍

Spent this morning listening to this amazing panel of women CEOs highlighting the changes to the transportation industry over the last two years and the importance of remembering that we drive a car by looking out the front windshield, not looking in the rear view mirror. We need to stop focusing on "we've always done it this way" and start planning for how we should do things in the future. So, so impactful. [#womenleaders](#) [#WTSIExpedition22](#) [#WTSCFL](#)



 **Negaar Minaei, PTP** (She/Her) • 2nd  
Transportation Planner 3 at CDM Smith  
1mo • Edited • 📍


I would like to express my gratitude to WTS Central Florida Chapter for granting me this great opportunity to go to the WTS annual conference in Seattle. It was a unique experience in my career and allowed me to extend my network. I got the chance to meet many professionals, colleagues, and cohorts whom I could have not gotten to know elsewhere. I got to listen and learn from my peers and hear their paths to success. There were so many inspiring moments and speeches at the conference and there are some that I think will forever be with me.

Ms. [Yassmin Gramian](#) delivered a motivating speech on the importance of gender equity in the workplace which gave me a new perspective on adjusting my career goals.

"Step through your fears" by [Inez Evans](#), WTS Women of the Year.

"Sometimes you need to get rid of trees that may be deeply rooted to get to your vision" by [Sydne Jacques, PE, CSP](#)

And finally, from my favorite keynote speaker, [Susan O'Malley](#) "we understand that people mess up. How far will you go to make it right?"  
[#WTS](#) [#WTSIExpedition22](#) [#WTSCFL](#)



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# Membership



Lauren Torres, E.I.T., RSP 1  
Project Manager

Orange County Traffic Engineering Division



We are pleased to spotlight Lauren Torres, E.I.T., RSP 1, a Project Manager with the Orange County Traffic Engineering Division. She has over 15 years of experience in Civil Engineering in the areas of stormwater design and traffic operations, specializing in safety and multi-modal transportation. She was recently featured on [WESH 2 News](#) highlighting the transportation safety crisis in Central Florida.

Lauren became a WTS member in February 2022 to expand her network and get first hand access to all the great programming and benefits that WTS provides.

Lauren's passion for making our roadways safer for all started many years ago when she volunteered with the homeless and at-risk youth. While working as a Case Manager at Covenant House in Orlando in her spare time, a client she was working with was fatally hit and killed on SR 436 while trying to cross the street after getting off the bus after work. This tragedy happens all too often, and after some research, she discovered this was not the first-time young adults living at the shelter had been injured or killed while trying to get to the bus station for work or school.

This pivotal event led her to become involved in her local schools as part of the PTA or with professional organizations that worked with schools in the Orlando area and inspired her to start working in Transportation Engineering at the City of Orlando. This was an impactful position because she was able to continue her work in safety and was part of multiple safety initiatives that included the first green bike lanes in downtown Orlando, designated bus lanes on I-Drive and multiple safety projects around schools in the Orlando area, including a policy for school zones that was later adopted by both Orange and Osceola Counties.

Over four years ago she joined Orange County Government and manages the Traffic Engineering's Safety Team. With her supervision, the Safety Team has initiated the raised crosswalk program at designated school crossings, installation of bike lanes in corridors that were undergoing resurfacing, rectangular rapid flashing beacon installations at multiple crossing locations and Road Safety Audits throughout the County that led to thousands of dollars in improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists. The team has also developed a speed reduction program that has safely and effectively reduced speeding through many corridors in the County.

She holds a master's degree in Business Administration with a focus on project management from Strayer University and a bachelor's in civil engineering from the University of Central Florida. Lauren has been honored with an award from FDOT District 5 for Safety Engineering projects in 2019, Best Foot Forward's Award for outstanding pedestrian and safety improvements on Pine Hills Rd in 2022 and recognition by the Institute of Transportation Engineers for her work in pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

We are honored to have Lauren as part of the WTS family and we look forward to helping her improve transportation safety outcomes in Central Florida.



# Welcome to our New Members!

- Ashley Schnetzer, EcoPreserve
- Magaly Bruno, Exp
- Gina Rodriguez, Dewberry
- Malaica Daceus, The Lane Construction Corporation
- Alexandra Riley, UCF
- Crystal Odoh, HDR
- Suzette Taylor, TeamFL
- Evelyn Cardenas
- Kristen Bridges, Jacobs
- Karina Filipovich, CONSOR Engineers
- Sally Lynn Hogan, AICP Parsons
- Julie Keller, KSM Engineering



> Central Florida

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CHECK OUT RESOURCES  
AVAILABLE TO WTS MEMBERS

Home-MyWTS Communities  
([wtsinternational.org](http://wtsinternational.org))

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# Upcoming Events

Register at [wtsinternational.org/chapters/central-florida/events](https://wtsinternational.org/chapters/central-florida/events)



Beyond Roads – Economic Benefit of the Orange County Transportation Sales Tax Initiative is the subject of the next WTS Central Florida Chapter program on July 21.

The Central Florida economy is on the rise along with our transportation needs. The proposed Orange County Transportation Sales Tax will benefit beyond roads by expanding the transit service, which based on ridership, will improve transportation equity.

In addition, potential roadway projects will incorporate Complete Streets for safety improvements for all users - including the potential for specified transit lanes, additional transit stops, separated bike lanes, and continuous sidewalks.

Join us to hear about how the Orange County referendum will impact our industry.

## Save The Date!



District of Columbia • Virginia • North Carolina • Tennessee • South Carolina • Georgia • Alabama • Florida

Southeastern States Department of Transportation Rail Divisions and the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) North Carolina Triangle Chapter are jointly hosting a regional forum on rail issues focused on seven Southeastern states.

Southeast Rail Forum (SRF): Ready to Build is scheduled for March 22-24, 2023 in Washington, D.C.

Invited speakers include Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) officials, State Transportation Secretaries, State Rail Officials, Railroad Executives, industry experts, and local and state political leaders throughout the region.

Register at: [southeast-rail-forum.constantcontactsites.com/](https://southeast-rail-forum.constantcontactsites.com/)

# Upcoming Events

Register at [wtsinternational.org/chapters/central-florida/events](https://wtsinternational.org/chapters/central-florida/events)

## 2022 SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARDS BANQUET

**WTS**

> Central Florida


Advancing women  
Advancing transportation

SCHOLARSHIP. LEADERSHIP. SERVICE.

**25<sup>TH</sup>**  
ANNUAL  
BANQUET



**FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKER**



**Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr.**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Jacksonville  
Transportation Authority

**SEAWORLD PORTS OF CALL**  
**September 29, 2022**  
**5:30 pm – 9:30 pm**



**WITH SPECIAL GUEST**

**Jannet Walker-Ford**  
Chair  
WTS International Board of Directors

## Thank you to our 2022 Annual Sponsors

<b>PLATINUM</b>	<b>HNTB</b>	<b>TranSystems</b> EXPERIENCE   Transportation	<b>ATKINS</b> Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group	<b>VOLKERT</b>		
<b>GOLD</b>	<b>CTS</b> Engineering Commitment to Excellence	<b>Stantec</b>	<b>vhb.</b>	<b>BURGESS &amp; NIPLE</b> Engineers • Architects • Planners	<b>Dewberry</b>	<b>Jacobs</b>
<b>SILVER</b>	<b>Inwood</b> consulting engineers	<b>FEHR &amp; PEERS</b>	<b>CDM Smith</b>	<b>AIM Engineering &amp; Surveying, Inc.</b>	<b>protean</b> DESIGN GROUP	
<b>BRONZE</b>	<b>FGA</b>	<b>TERRA</b>	<b>HDR</b>	<b>wood.</b>	<b>PARSONS</b>	
	<b>RS&amp;H</b>	<b>DRMP</b> ENGINEER • SURVEYOR • PLANNER • SCIENTIST	<b>GPI</b>	<b>KN</b> ENGINEERING	<b>ARDURRA</b> Think big	



# Recent Activities

## Blessed Bag Project

On April 16, 2022, the WTS Central Florida Chapter hosted a blessing bag assembly day at GPI / Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.

The chapter will distribute the bags to those facing homelessness.

Thank you to our Community Outreach committee for organizing this effort, and to the local transportation community for the support.



## 2022 A Walk in Her Shoes

In support of Dress for Success Greater Orlando

During this year's A Walk in Her Shoes event, we heard from women trailblazers who have not only climbed ladders but have led the way to advance women and advance transportation. The stories behind their success were not only inspiring but uplifting.

A few gems shared 

*"Each one of you must have a dream in order to make that dream come true"* – Ann McNeill

*"Find someone who dreams beyond your dream"*

– Jennifer Marshall

*"Know your bounds but go just a little bit further"*

– Valerie Seidel

*"We tell our family and spouses we love them, but sometimes we don't tell our friends we love them, make sure you do"* - Julie Keller



## Sinkhole de Mayo Charity Fundraiser

In support of Give Kids The World Village

On May 26, 2022, the WTS Central Florida Chapter worked alongside ASHE Central Florida (American Society of Highway Engineers) and FES-CFL (Florida Engineering Society) for the Sinkhole De Mayo charity event fundraiser supporting Give Kids The World Village.

ASHE CFL with FES-CFL and WTSCFL were able to raise over \$3,000 for Give Kids The World Village!





## Uncovering Unconscious Bias

On June 14, 2022, WTS Central Florida held its first Juneteenth event, "Uncovering Unconscious Bias".

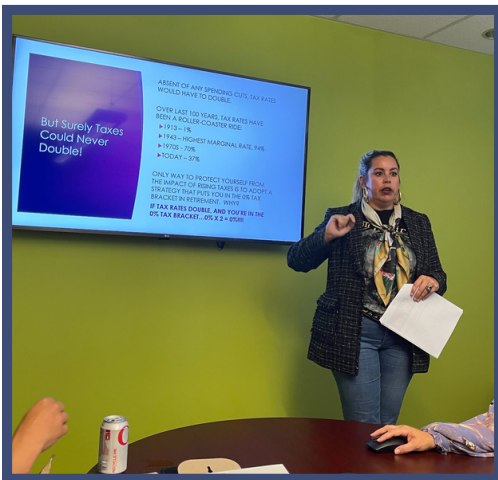
Organized and facilitated by the chapter's D&I committee (Stacey Russell, CDP®, Erika Booker and Gail Woods), the event included a review of Proctor & Gambles' "The Look," as well as an facilitated discussion.

Attendees walked away with a deeper understanding of how bias influences decision-making and tools to combat those impulses.

It was a pleasure partnering with Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Florida) and Young Professionals in Transportation Orlando on this event.



## Women in Wealth Lunch and Learn



We were thrilled to partner with Gambin Financial Group for this members-only event at S&ME Orlando offices on June 28.

Gambin's Women in Wealth (WIW) initiative is singularly focused on creating a preeminent financial planning experience for women that will help change the way participants think and feel about money.

Topics included:

- Cash Flow and Debt Management
- Retirement Planning
- Investing, Tax Planning, and Distribution
- Financial Planning for families & things to consider:
- Estate planning best practices
- Life Insurance – what’s the right amount
- Retirement planning
- Education planning



Thank you for having us, Gambian Financial Group and S&ME!

# ASCE (YMF) Florida East Central Branch's Icebreaker Event

WTS Central Florida was proud to be Society Sponsor of the ASCE (YMF) Florida East Central Branch's Icebreaker event at the Orlando Science Center.

The well-attended annual event raises money for student scholarships and supports educational outreach to the next generation of engineering leaders.

Our team had a DINOmite time, and we look forward to attending again in 2023!



## Thank you to our 2022 Annual Sponsors

PLATINUM						
GOLD						
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# Join WTS

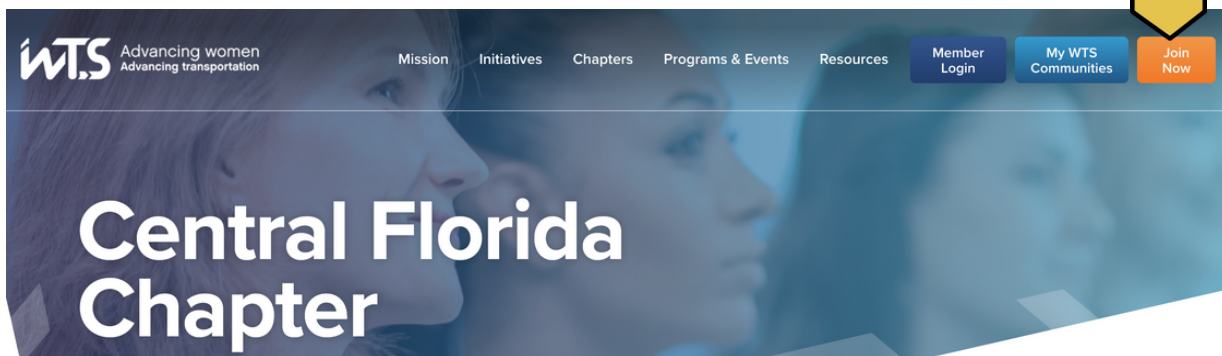
We would love to have you join us! To start your membership with WTS, go to our website using the QR code or URL below.

SCAN QR CODE OR USE URL:

<https://www.wtsinternational.org/chapters/central-florida>



CLICK ON JOIN WTS BUTTON  
(UPPER RIGHT CORNER)



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# Follow us on Social Media

Stay connected with all things WTS Central Florida by following us on all social media. Be sure to use the hashtag #WTSCFL in any of your chapter- related posts! We love to see and share your WTS content.

- WTSCFL Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/wtscentralflorida>
- WTSCFL Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/55161918824>
- WTSCFL Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/wtscentralflorida/>
- WTSCFL Twitter: <https://twitter.com/wtscentralfla>
- WTSCFL LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/wtscfl>