

2022 WTS Professional Development Seminar

September 23, 2022

Austin, TX

It Takes a Village: Spotlighting the Broad Range of Roles in Transportation

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Schedule

8:15 am - Check-in

8:30 am - Coffee and Continental Breakfast

8:50 am - Welcoming Remarks

9:00 am - 9:45 am: Panel 1

Marketing & Communications Roles in Transportation

- Shuronda Robinson (Adisa Communications, CEO)
- Sylvia Shelton (Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, Communications Manager)
- Lori Reza (Freese and Nichols, Inc., Marketing Coordinator)

9:45 am - 10:30 am: Panel 2

Environmental Roles in Transportation

- Shari Cannon-Mackey (Burns & McDonnell, NEPA/Environmental Planning for Transportation Project Manager)
- Scott Pletka, Ph.D. (Texas Department of Transportation, Supervisor, Archaeological Studies Branch)
- Meghan Lind (Stantec, Technical Services Manager/Senior Ecologist & Project Manager)

10:30 am - 10:45 am: Break

10:45 am - 11:30 am: Panel 3

Engineering Roles in Transportation

- Akila Thamizharasan, PE, PTOE, PMP (Texas Department of Transportation Austin District, Director of Advance Project Development)
- Santiago Araque, PE (Kimley-Horn, Traffic Engineer)
- Christine Cheng, EIT (HDR, Traffic Engineer)

11:30 am - 11:45 pm: Break for Catering Setup

11:45 am - 12:45 pm: Lunch and Keynote Speaker

Keynote Speaker

- Rob Spillar, PE (STV, Smart Cities National Director)

12:45 pm - 1:00 pm: Break

1:00 pm - 1:45 pm: Panel 4

Planning Roles in Transportation

- Annick Beaudet, MPA, AICP (Project Connect, Mobility Officer)
- Jacob Calhoun, AICP (Austin Transit Partnership, Director of Program-Wide Contracts)
- Cecley Hill (Asakura Robinson, Urban Planner)

1:45 pm - 2:00 pm: Closing Remarks

9:00 am - 9:45 am

Session 1: Marketing & Communications Roles in Transportation

Moderator:

Jackie Sartor



Foresight Planning & Engineering Services, Business Development Director

Jackie Sartor is a marketing professional with more than 20 years of experience in strategic marketing, business development, event and conference planning, business communications, public and media relations, social media marketing, promotions, advertising, fundraising, writing, and photography. Jackie has worked with public and private sector clients from a variety of industries including Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Publishing, Healthcare, Non-Profit, High Tech, Music & Entertainment, Retail, and Real Estate. Jackie earned a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations and Communications from Texas A&M University. In 2018, Jackie and her two fur babies moved to their Pfor-ever home in Pflugerville. In her spare time, Jackie enjoys taking in live music, supporting local charities, and visiting local shops, restaurants, wineries, breweries, and distilleries.

Panelists:



Shuronda Robinson

Adisa Communications, President & CEO

For nearly 30 years Shuronda Robinson has helped policymakers improve decision-making processes and implement successful multi-million dollar social services, transportation, planning, infrastructure, and public affairs programs throughout Texas. She is the president and CEO of Adisa Communications, an award-winning communication firm based in Austin, Texas. Her private sector clients rely on her level-headed approach to public relations and include WSP, AECOM, HNTB, Frost Bank, and Lenovo, among many others. Her public sector clients benefit from her expertise in messaging, strategy, and equity.

Shuronda enjoys taking on the more interesting and complex projects – often saying, “Call me after you’ve made all of the easy decisions!” She remains active in her community through many groups — from Austin PBS to the Boys & Girls Clubs — and along with a college buddy, started Austin’s citywide MLK Celebrations, which has grown crowds of more than 20,000 annually. For nearly a decade she served as the vice president of the Austin Foundation for Architecture. Shuronda is currently a member of the PBS Austin Board of Directors and vice president of Finding Home ATX — an organization committed to solving Austin’s homelessness crisis. She lives in Austin, and is the proud mother of three young men, two of whom serve in the U.S. Navy and Army.



Sylvia Shelton

Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, Communications Manager

Sylvia Shelton has worked in the advertising and marketing industry for more than a decade with a broad range of experience from national comprehensive advertising campaigns to grassroots guerilla marketing efforts. Since joining the Mobility Authority in 2016, she is responsible for managing internal and external branding

and messaging, as well as public involvement initiatives. Sylvia is passionate about helping people in meaningful ways and has therefore pushed all messaging to be inclusive and community focused. Prior to joining the Mobility Authority, she spent eight years working at local advertising agency Sanders\Wingo. There Sylvia represented several large national clients with a focus on television, radio, and digital production. She is a graduate of Texas State University. When not at work, you can find her with her dog and a good book or teaching herself a new hobby.



Lori Reza

Freese and Nichols, Inc., Marketing Coordinator

Lori Reza is a Marketing Coordinator in the Freese and Nichols, Inc. (FNI) Austin office. Her three years of experience includes working on pursuits for a wide variety of disciplines across local, state, and federal entities. Lori works closely with FNI technical and sales staff to develop strategies that best serve clients and enhance relationships. She also helps produce communication practices that are used to support a strong partnership within the firm. Lori has a BA in Communications from the University of Houston, and through her coursework participated in several fields of marketing. She is also a U.S. Navy veteran. While serving, Lori was required to adapt to an ever-changing environment and execute quickly. These skills have continued to help her effectively navigate through the fast-paced marketing industry. Lori is currently a member of the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) Austin Chapter.

9:45 am - 10:30 am:

Session 2: Environmental Roles in Transportation

Moderator



Mary Jo Galindo, Ph.D.

Galindo Environmental Consulting, Archaeologist and Owner

Dr. Mary Jo Galindo is an archaeologist and owner of Galindo Environmental Consulting in Austin and San Antonio, Texas. She has more than 20 years of experience conducting archaeological projects throughout Texas in compliance with local, state, and federal laws. These projects include the Texas Tribal Histories Project by the Texas Department of Transportation, which created a set of geographic historical narratives of tribal presence in Texas through collaboration with 11 participating Tribes. The tribal histories and the GIS data derived from them will be used by Cultural Resources Management (CRM) professionals and TxDOT planners.

Panelists:



Shari Cannon-Mackey

Burns & McDonnell, NEPA/Environmental Planning for Transportation Project Manager

Shari Cannon-Mackey has been leading environmental planning and permitting and the NEPA process for all modes of transportation for more than 30 years. She has successfully completed projects across 28 states with her work supporting the relocation of a commercial airport, daylighting of a freight rail tunnel within a state park and nominated national historic landmark, and replacement of numerous major historic river bridges. Through all of her projects Shari has mentored other women across various disciplines in the

transportation sector. She has been a member of the WTS HOT Chapter since 2014, is a graduate of the inaugural 2015 WTS Executive Leadership Course, was the 2019 HOT Chapter Woman of the Year, has participated in GirlStart workshops and the WTS HOT Chapter Mentor-Mentee program, and has supported Burns & McDonnell's roles in the Dallas-Fort Worth, Kansas City, and Southern California WTS chapters through mentoring and making technical presentations. In her spare time, Shari cooks for her family and office mates and trains Bernese Mountain dogs with her husband.



Scott Pletka, Ph.D.

Texas Department of Transportation, Supervisor,
Archaeological Studies Branch

Dr. Scott Pletka is the archeology environmental program manager for the Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Section of the TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division. He has overseen the daily archaeological operations of the section for more than 19 years. TxDOT is the single-largest permittee of archeology in Texas. From surveys to data recovery, TxDOT has discovered and uncovered some of the most significant archaeological sites in Texas as it plans around 80,000 miles of roadway. Scott earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California, Los Angeles, and his bachelors from the University of Michigan.



Meghan Lind

Stantec, Technical Services Manager/Senior Ecologist &
Project Manager

Meghan Lind is a Senior Ecologist and Project Manager with more than 12 years of experience in the permitting and compliance of a wide variety of projects including transmission line infrastructure, transportation, municipal improvements, and private construction. She specializes in complex NEPA documentation and has authored more than 35 informal/formal/programmatic consultation documents for coordination with the USFWS/NMFS. Meghan has served as a technical lead for transmission projects in five states and routinely manages projects from inception through permitting, and into construction compliance. She offers additional expertise as a USFWS-permitted biologist and has worked with endangered species extensively in the Southwest, California, and Hawaii. Meghan currently serves as a Principal and manages the Technical Services group of the Cox|McLain, now Stantec, business center in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

10:30 am - 10:45 am

Session 3: Engineering Roles in Transportation

Moderator



Stephanie Russell, PE

Garver, Project Manager

Stephanie Russell is a Project Manager for Garver with more than 13 years of experience in Transportation, Construction, and Land Development in Central Texas. She received her bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and has lived in Austin for most of her life. In her career, she's led designs and managed a broad range of transportation, public works, and development projects throughout her career for both private and public entities, most notably TxDOT, CTRMA, cities of Austin, Cedar Park, and Round Rock, and Hays and Williamson counties. She has

worked for Garver for more than a year and is managing a team of engineers in the Austin office. Stephanie's key strengths include coordination between different entities, a "big picture" mindset, and adapting quickly to new roles and challenges. In her free time, Stephanie enjoys reading, tea, cooking, getting outside, and spending time with friends, family, and pets.

Panelists:



Akila Thamizharasan, PE, PTOE, PMP

Texas Department of Transportation Austin District, Director
of Advance Project Development

Akila Thamizharasan has more than 21 years of experience in the transportation industry. She graduated from Clemson University with a Masters in Transportation Engineering. She then worked at several multinational transportation firms and gained extensive experience managing a broad range of transportation projects that involve traffic engineering studies, roadway design, multimodal projects, and systems planning. With a keen interest to serve the public, Akila shifted her career to the public sector and has been working at TxDOT since 2019. She currently serves as Director of Advanced Project Development at the TxDOT Austin District. Akila manages the Project Delivery, Programming, Local Government, Schematics, and Environmental programs at the district.



Santiago Araque, PE

Kimley-Horn, Traffic Engineer

Santiago Araque has 10 years of experience working in transportation engineering. He has a bachelor and master's degree in Civil Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology. Santiago's work with Kimley-Horn includes project development from conceptual planning to infrastructure design and construction. He is a huge sports fan and has had the opportunity to do event planning for events including the Super Bowl and the construction of new stadiums. In his spare time, Santiago enjoys playing soccer and watching Austin FC.



Christine Cheng, EIT

HDR, Traffic Engineer

As a Traffic Engineer at HDR, Christine Cheng has worked on projects involving traffic signal timing, IAJRs, transportation plans, TIAs, crash analysis, and corridor studies. She helps lead HDR's local Austin Young Professionals chapter that provides members with networking, community service, and professional development opportunities. Prior to working at HDR, Christine graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a bachelor's in Civil Engineering and a master's in Transportation Engineering, where she conducted research with the Center for Transportation Research and the City of Austin to develop performance metrics for evaluating the City's signal retiming efforts.

11:45 am - 12:45 pm

Lunch and Keynote Speaker



Rob Spillar, PE

STV, Smart Cities National Director

Robert Spillar (Rob) serves as STV's National Director of Smart Cities. Based in Austin, Texas, he focuses on solving urban challenges for communities across North America. Having started with STV in July of 2022, Rob is new to the STV family of companies but not new to the Smart City and Urban Engineering marketplace.

Rob has had a 30-year career solving complex urban challenges from both the private and public vantage points. Prior to STV, Rob served for 14 years as the founding Director of Transportation for the City of Austin's Transportation Department (ATD). Under his direction, ATD continuously demonstrated innovation in program areas such as Vision Zero safety programs; bicycle, pedestrian and complete street design; arterial operations; parking management; transit coordination and prioritization; traffic engineering; and, development permitting. Under his guidance, ATD passed five sequential mobility bond programs totaling in excess of \$1.5B. ATD was also named a national finalist in the USDOT 2015 Smart City Challenge that launched the Smart City focused approach for all mobility programs at the City of Austin.

Before serving as Austin's Transportation Director, Rob worked at Parsons Brinckerhoff as a Vice President and Project Lead in their Austin, Seattle, and Houston offices. He also served as Director of Traffic Management at the City of Seattle.

1:00 pm - 1:45 pm

Session 4: Planning Roles in Transportation

Moderator



Caroline LaFollette, PE

K Friese + Associates, Engineer and Technical Writer

Caroline LaFollette has a background in transportation planning, municipal engineering, and Intelligent Transportation Systems, and provides technical writing and planning services to public sector agencies such as TxDOT, CAMPO, CTRMA, Hays County, and the cities of Austin, Buda, and Kyle. A proud native Austinite, she enjoys working with local agencies to clearly communicate technical concepts to a wide variety of audiences including project stakeholders, community members, and decision makers. Caroline received her Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from North Carolina State University. She has been a member of the WTS Heart of Texas Chapter since 2018 and has served on the Professional Development Committee since 2021.

Panelists:



Annick Beaudet, MPA, AICP

Project Connect, Mobility Officer

Annick Beaudet is a leader in public sector governance, with extensive experience and practice in transportation, capital project delivery, and land use planning. She has served in multiple positions with the City of Austin, with the most recent being Assistant Director with ATD and currently serves as the Mobility Officer leading the City's role in a tri-agency partnership to deliver Project Connect, a \$7B transit program.

Annick holds a bachelor's degree in Geography from the University of Texas at Austin, a master's of Public Administration from Penn State and was a member of the inaugural National Association of Local Transportation Officials (NACTO) Leadership Program cohort. As a certified urban planner by the American Planning Association, Annick feels strongly that citywide planning processes are key to building community trust and collectively creating a vision that can be funded and implemented. She continues to hone her leadership skills by challenging herself every day to learn more about equity and approach her work through an equity lens.



Jacob Calhoun, AICP

Austin Transit Partnership, Director of Program-Wide Contracts

Jacob Calhoun has been working on Project Connect for more than six years. He is currently the Director of Program-wide Contracts for the Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) managing \$200 million worth of contracts to deliver Project Connect. Prior to joining ATP he was a long-range transportation planner at CapMetro developing the Project Connect system plan. Jacob has worn many hats on the Project Connect program including project management, corridor planning, public involvement, TOD, and more. He previously worked at ATG and the City of Temple prior to joining CapMetro. Jacob received his master's in Urban Management and Development from Erasmus University and his bachelor's in Sport Management from Texas A&M University.



Cecley Hill

Asakura Robinson, Urban Planner

Cecley Hill is an Urban Planner at Asakura Robinson with a critical interest in using community-led planning processes, data visualization, and interdisciplinary approaches to rethink equity in the built environment. She holds a bachelor's in Architecture and Dance from Columbia University and a master's in Urban Planning with Distinction from Harvard Graduate School of Design. Her portfolio includes small area planning, economic development, affordable housing policy and transportation projects, all aimed at creating more equitable, livable spaces. Her architecture, design, and engagement background has provided opportunity to collaborate on socially oriented research and planning processes in both the public and private sectors around the U.S. and internationally.



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