



> Houston

Advancing women
Advancing transportation

Roaring Twenties



Scholarship & Awards Gala



WELCOME

On behalf of the 2022-2023 Board of Directors and the Scholarship Awards Committee, thank you for your continued contributions to the WTS Houston Chapter. We are committed to advancing the careers of women in transportation through education and professional development. With your support, the WTS Houston Chapter is able to encourage women pursuing careers in transportation by awarding local scholarships to students at the high school, undergraduate and graduate levels.

OUR SCHOLARSHIPS

HELENE M. OVERLY MEMORIAL

The scholarship is awarded to women pursuing graduate studies in transportation or a related field. This award is for \$7,000.

SHARON D. BANKS MEMORIAL

Fosters the development of women in the transportation field by encouraging bright, new professionals to undertake careers in transportation. This award is for \$6,000.

TRANSPORTATION YOU & TRADE SCHOOL

Fosters the development of women and girls in transportation field by encouraging bright, new professionals and students to undertake careers in transportation. This award is for \$3,500 scholarship.

PAULA HAMMOND LEADERSHIP LEGACY

For graduate students who are the future leaders of transportation and who demonstrate interest in advancing transportation innovation. This award is for \$1,000.

MOLITORIS LEADERSHIP

For undergraduate students in transportation or related field who demonstrate leadership skills, ability and interest. This award is for \$1,000.

**WTS Houston scholarships will be presented by
our 2023 Titanium Sponsors.**

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2023 GALA SPONSORS

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PROGRAM

Opening Reception

Silent Auction and Social Networking	5:30 PM
Gala Games Round 1	6:50 PM
Seated Dinner	7:00 PM

Scholarship & Awards Presentation

President's Welcome	7:15 PM
Scholarship Presentation	7:35 PM
Gala Games Round 2	7:50 PM
Silent Auction Closes	8:00 PM
Awards Presentation	8:10 PM
2023 Young Engineer of the Year	
Member of the Year	
Rosa Parks Diversity	
Innovative Transportation Solutions	
Employer of the Year	
Honorable Ray LaHood	
Woman of the Year	

Closing

Gala Games Round 3	8:50 PM
Silent Auction & Gala Game Winners Announced	9:00 PM

WOMAN OF THE YEAR SPONSOR

OUTSTANDING!

It's DEC's great pleasure to recognize WTS Houston Woman of the Year and Honorable Ray LaHood award winners for their outstanding support to advance women in transportation. We're also proud to support the WTS Houston Chapter through the involvement of our employees.

Woman of the Year
Onyinye Akujuo
Chief Operating Officer
Houston-Galveston Area Council

Through strategic leadership and collaboration, Onyinye Akujuo oversees H-GAC's transportation planning programs, public safety, human services, community planning, procurement and contracts, and data analytics and research initiatives.



Onyinye Akujuo

Honorable Ray LaHood Man of the Year
Michel Maksoud, Ph.D., P.E.
President and CEO
DEC | Engineering Excellence

Michel Maksoud, Ph.D., P.E., is an inspiring executive who leads by example. He is an excellent structural and bridge engineer, respected industry leader, dedicated mentor and active community volunteer. He sets high standards for himself and encourages others to always do their best.



Michel Maksoud, Ph.D., P.E.

ABOUT DEC

We strive to deliver engineering excellence, we build enduring relationships, and we positively impact the communities where we work.

Since its founding in 1945, DEC has built a solid reputation as a premier civil engineering firm with expertise in water resources, water and wastewater infrastructure, transportation, land development, program management and much more.

DEC
ENGINEERING
EXCELLENCE

Congratulations WTS Houston Scholarship Winners

HELENE M. OVERLY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP:

Disha Chaturvedi, Texas A&M University,
Graduate Student in Master of Urban & Regional Planning

PAULA HAMMOND LEADERSHIP LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP:

Olajumoke "Lizzy" Omosebi, Texas Southern University,
Masters of Science in Transportation Planning & Management

SHARON D. BANKS MEMORIAL UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP:

Dorimekka Jacquelyn Nichols, Texas Southern University,
BS Maritime Transportation Management & Security

MOLITORIS LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE:

Kameelah Muhammad, Texas Southern University,
BS Maritime Transportation Management & Security

TRANSPORTATION YOU SCHOLARSHIP:

Sally Tram-Anh Nguyen, Harmony School of Advancement

Congratulations
WTS Houston Award Recipients

2023 YOUNG ENGINEER OF THE YEAR:

Ashley Purkey, P.E., Half Associates

MEMBER OF THE YEAR:

Thalia I. Gonzalez, P.E., Jacobs

ROSA PARKS DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD:

Veronica O. Davis, P.E., City of Houston

INNOVATIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS:

The Regional Express Access Lanes (REAL) Plan, TxDOT Houston District

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR:

HDR

HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD AWARD:

Michel Maksoud, PH.D., P.E., DEC

WOMAN OF THE YEAR:

Onyinye Akujuo, Houston-Galveston Area Council

2023 YOUNG ENGINEER OF THE YEAR



Ashley Purkey P.E. is a civil engineer at Halff with over nine years of professional experience. After receiving a BS in Civil Engineering from the University of Alabama, she worked with a geotechnical engineering firm in Colorado for a year before moving to Richardson, Texas to work with Halff's public works team. In 2018, Ashley transferred to the Houston office and has since designed roadway projects in Harris and surrounding counties.

She also provides engineering services for recreational projects for the Houston Parks Board. In April 2022, Ashley was promoted to Public Works Team Leader in the Halff Houston office. Ashley is an active member of the WTS Houston Chapter, currently serving as the Communications Committee Chair. Ashley has also participated in the WTS Houston Mentorship Program as both a mentee and mentor.

MEMBER OF THE YEAR



Thalia Izela Gonzalez, P.E. is an accomplished Transportation Project Engineer at Jacobs with a passion for innovation and excellence in everything she does. With over 8 years of experience, Thalia has established herself within the transportation industry. Thalia graduated with a Bachelors in Science in Civil/ Environmental Engineering and Minor in German from the University of Houston. At Jacobs, she is a people leader and serves as technical lead on TxDOT projects. Her experience includes roadway, traffic, and signal design on a multitude of projects.

Thalia currently serves on the WTS Houston Chapter Board as Treasurer and has been an active WTS member since 2016. Thalia is passionate and dedicated to the WTS mission of advancing women in transportation through her support of the chapter. She is also a graduate of the WTS Houston Mentorship program and the winner of the WTS 2021 Young Engineer of the Year award. In her free time, Thalia loves to travel, run in Memorial Park, cook new recipes and eat at new restaurants around Houston.

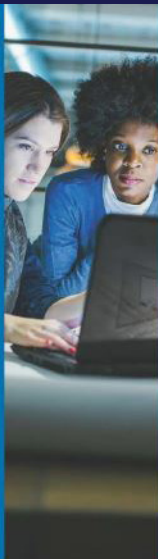
MAN OF THE YEAR SPONSOR

Jacobs is proud to support WTS Houston

Congratulations to
this year's winners and
scholarship awardees!

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ROSA PARKS DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD



Veronica O. Davis, P.E. is a self-described transportation nerd. She believes all people should have access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation. She has experience in civil engineering and planning. She is currently the Director of Transportation & Drainage Operations for the City of Houston. Veronica is also the co-founder and former Managing Partner at Nspiregreen LLC, and is also one of the cofounders of Black Women Bike (BWB).

She is the Vice President and City of Houston representative on the National Association of City Transportation Officials. She earned her two master's degrees (Engineering Management and Regional Planning) from Cornell University. She has a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering from the University of Maryland. She lives in the Houston with her husband, daughter, and dog.

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INNOVATIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS



The Regional Express Access Lanes (REAL) Plan is the first comprehensive transportation plan developed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) – Houston District, visualizing how the region's transportation network will evolve over time to move people and goods. The Regional Express Access Lanes (REAL) are a proposed interconnected system of managed express lanes linked to passenger hubs and freight villages. This plan will connect and integrate the greater Houston region's roadway, transit, and freight systems to provide an efficient, equitable, flexible, and seamless multimodal network.

Our region's vision for safe and connected systems that move both people and goods are conceptualized in the REAL Plan. The REAL Plan has successfully concluded its phase I development with the regional transportation vision and concepts defined and consensus among numerous regional and local stakeholders in the Houston metropolitan region. Future efforts are undergoing, which would focus on sub-regional and corridor level studies to improve transportation safety, mobility, accessibility, equity, and resiliency. The REAL Plan is the start of a conversation in the Houston region that will help to guide the development transportation for the next half century or more as new technology, infrastructure needs and community demands evolve.

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR



This award honors an organization for recruiting, retaining and advancing women. For over a century, HDR has partnered with clients to shape communities and push the boundaries of what's possible.

Our expertise spans more than 11,000 employees in more than 200 locations around the world and counting. Our Houston office was founded in 1985, and we currently have over 140 employees in the Houston area. Our engineering, architecture, environmental and construction services bring an impressive breadth of knowledge to every project. Our approach to finding innovative solutions defines our past and drives our future.

HDR supports active involvement in WTS throughout the region and around the country, and they have sponsored WTS on many levels financially and have supported female employees in leadership positions. HDR is committed to the advancement of women and will continue to support WTS for years to come.

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we are here

Across Houston, our innovative spark is creating infrastructure solutions that strengthen our community.

HNTB

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HNTB is proud to be a dedicated supporter of WTS in Houston and across the country.

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Together, we make great things possible

At HDR, more than 250 professional women and men proudly support the important work of WTS. We know when everyone wins, progress begins.

Proud Titanium sponsor of WTS Houston
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MAN OF THE YEAR



DEC President and CEO Michel Maksoud, Ph.D., P.E., is an inspiring executive who leads by example. He is an excellent structural and bridge engineer, respected industry leader, dedicated mentor and active community volunteer. He sets high standards for himself and encourages others to always do their best. Dr. Maksoud's enthusiasm for structural design inspires younger engineers to continuously improve. As a structural engineer, he is an inspiring role model who helps clients and contractors solve problems in an innovative, timely manner. DEC's slogan, Engineering Excellence, has long been his guiding principle. As company head since 2019, Dr. Maksoud has instituted positive changes to make DEC better. His collaborative management style has increased employee engagement and transparency. Employees have a clear view of where the company is going and are engaged in making DEC better.

Dr. Maksoud attended The Pennsylvania State University, earning master's and doctoral degrees in civil engineering. He earned his Bachelor of Engineering in civil engineering from the American University of Beirut. He is a licensed professional engineer in the state of Texas.

WOMAN OF THE YEAR



Onyinye Akujuo is the chief operating officer for the Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC). Through strategic leadership and collaboration, she oversees HGAC's transportation planning programs, public safety, workforce development, area agency on aging, economic development, community planning, procurement and contracts, and data analytics and research initiatives. For nearly 20 years, Onyinye has served in key leadership roles at organizations, such as the New York City Department of Transportation, New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority.

Onyinye's leadership expertise spans operational, compliance, grant development, transportation planning and management, new project funding and support, strategy, and community development. Onyinye holds an MBA from the Cornell

University Johnson School of Business, a master's degree in corporate communications and integrated marketing from the New York Institute of Technology, and a Bachelor of Science from State University of New York at Old Westbury. She is an inaugural fellow of the New York University Transportation Emerging Fellowship.

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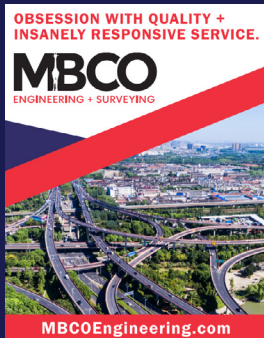
We combine traditional engineering, new technologies and creative thinking to bring our transportation clients' vision to life.

Building a better future for our planet and its people.

We're proud to be a supporter of the WTS Houston Scholarship and Awards Gala - bringing the region together to shape the future of transportation.

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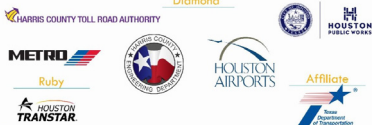


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