



2023 VOLUME 2

July 14, 2023

# HOT Chapter Newsletter



> Heart of Texas

Advancing women  
Advancing transportation

## IN THIS ISSUE

- President's Letter
- April/May/June Luncheons
- June Lattes & Leadership
- 19th Annual Gala
- 2023 Upcoming Events

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Greetings and Happy Summer to everyone in the WTS Heart of Texas community!

We have had some great experiences together this year, with more still to come.

In May, Laura Friello, Patty Trujillo, Jackie Sartor, and I traveled to Atlanta to experience the Great Intersection for the WTS International Conference. We joined more than 900 other participants in celebrating our industry's diversity (people, projects, etc.). I am happy to announce that the Heart of Texas Chapter once again achieved Gold status at International – the highest recognition category available!

We have enjoyed several great program luncheon presentations in the past few months. They included an insightful conversation with Capital Metro CEO Dottie Watkins in April, a panel discussion from Central Texas bicycle experts in May, and an overview of the exciting SmartTrak research project being jointly developed by the Center for Transportation Research and the TxDOT Austin District in May.

We were so thrilled to see so many of you at the 19th Annual WTS Heart of Texas Foundation Scholarship and Awards Gala, held June 17th at the Austin Hilton. Check out the rest of the newsletter for highlights, profiles of our scholarship and award winners, and photos of the fun time we had in our Boots and Bling. Thank you to everyone who made a generous contribution to help us raise over \$95,000 before expenses for the chapter's scholarship fund. We couldn't do it without you!

At the recent Lagers and Leadership event at The Brewtorium, we got to know Austin Airport Chief Development Officer, Somer Shindler, and WSP USA's Senior Vice President/Principal Consultant of Civil Rights Advisory Services and Compliance, Angela Berry Roberson. Please plan to join us for upcoming Lattes and Leadership coffee chats in July and August and hear from other women leaders in our transportation community. Details and registration information will be in your inbox soon.

You'll also have the opportunity soon to gather at an upcoming member networking event in July. And we are making plans for the annual Member Only event honoring our Corporate and Agency Partners in August. Stay tuned for details on those upcoming events.

Coming up in September is our Professional Development Seminar. This year's event will offer several hours of continuing education credits with sessions focused on the various aspects of the Lifecycle of a Project, including funding, planning, environmental, design, public involvement, right-of-way acquisition, construction, and maintenance. The keynote



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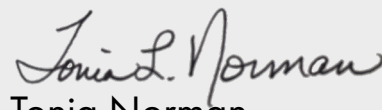
luncheon speaker will provide an update and overview of the Oakhill Parkway project. Mark your calendars for this annual event, scheduled for Friday, September 15th, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Maggiano's at the Domain. Watch your inbox for more information and the opportunity to register in the coming weeks.

As you can see, the chapter committees are busy working to provide you with varied, interesting, and relevant offerings each month. I encourage any of you who are not yet involved to join this amazing organization. Information on how to join can be found at <https://www.wtsinternational.org/mission/membership>. Be sure to look at our many different committees, reach out, and get involved. Our committees are always looking for new members and innovative ideas.

If you have any questions about WTS or the HOT chapter, please do not hesitate to contact me or anyone else on our board. I hope to see you all at one of our next events.

Stay cool and safe out there as you enjoy the rest of the summer!

Best regards,



Tonia Norman

## APRIL LUNCHEON

### Fire-side chat with Dottie Watkins, President and CEO of CapMetro

#### Public transit is a fun problem to solve

For the April WTS Heart of Texas Chapter luncheon, we had the privilege of hearing from Dottie Watkins, President & CEO of CapMetro, in Austin, TX. Dottie, a second-generation CapMetro employee following in her father's footsteps, shared her journey from starting as a part-time bus operator in 1994 to becoming CEO in January 2023. She emphasized the significance of leading authentically and embodying the organization's core values of safety, equity, transparency, sustainability, and innovation.

Dottie holds a Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Texas and a Master of Business Administration from St. Edward's University. When asked about the connection between public transportation and social work, Dottie replied, "Absolutely! Having to work with customers and operators is social work at its core." She highlighted the interconnectedness between the two fields, particularly at the micro-level, where this type of social work focuses on individuals or group/community-level engagement. With her background in social work, business and almost 30 years in the public transit industry, Dottie stressed the importance of ensuring Austin's public transportation systems are

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inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the community's needs. She emphasized the significance of supporting employees. "Focus on supporting the mission by supporting the people who do the work." Dottie is recognized at CapMetro for her depth of knowledge of what it takes to make transit operate and her unwavering commitment to her staff and the frontline team members the agency relies upon.

According to Dottie, "Public transit is a fun problem to solve," and she believes it's crucial for CapMetro to embrace diverse perspectives and individuals with different lived experiences. She reiterated the importance of community engagement and continuous investment in the community, underscoring their

work's impact on improving Austin residents' lives. "The work we do helps our community."

When discussing the importance of maintaining a work-life balance, Dottie stressed the need to show ourselves grace each day and challenged us to find outlets that make us happy and recharge us. Outside of her work in solving Austin's public transit challenges, you can find Dottie playing the French Horn in a local community band, engaging in quilting, and taking walks. She encouraged everyone to "hold good boundaries," which for her is ensuring she is always home for dinner with her young daughter and husband.

When asked what she still needs to learn, Dottie humbly expressed the challenge of balancing her identity as "being Dottie" and her role as the CEO. Prior to becoming President & CEO, she held several leadership positions within the agency, including Deputy CEO, Chief Operating Officer, and Vice President of Bus Operations and Maintenance. Dottie talked about the many years of being an employee, a front-line worker, and relationships built over the years with other staff members to now being the CEO. "This organization deserves the best CEO, and that's Dottie."

Dottie ended the fire-side chat with valuable advice, "Talk less and listen more." She reminded everyone to embrace their authentic selves and prioritize active listening to those around us.

## MAY LUNCHEON

### Let's Celebrate Bike Month: Growing Austin's Bicycle Network



The WTS Heart of Texas Chapter welcomed a panel of speakers for our May luncheon celebrating Bike Month. Anna Martin, Assistant Director for the Austin Transportation and Public Works (TPW) Department, moderated the discussion. TPW's Active Transportation and Street Design Division Manager Laura Dierenfield, Austin Capital Delivery Services Project Manager Ana Seivert, and CapMetro MetroBike Program Manager JD Simpson all served as panelists.

According to Martin, the City of Austin's Strategic Mobility Plan has a goal of 50/50 mode share between cars and other modes of transportation by 2039. Today, about 1% trips are taken by bike,

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and the goal is for bike trips to reach 5% by 2039. To assist in this desired shift, Dierenfield talked about how Austin's 2016 and 2020 Mobility Bonds funded \$60 million dollars for bikeways and another \$106 million for urban trails. Some notable projects included bike lanes along Duval Road from US 183 to Amherst Drive, as well as a protected intersections at Barton Hills Drive and Barton Skyway along with Zach Scott Street at Berkman Drive. Sievert talked further about work to implement urban trails around the City, including the Northern Walnut Creek Trail, Lower Boggy Creek Trail. A focus of the department has been wayfinding and placemaking along these trails as well.

CapMetro has also funneled significant investments into their MetroBike program, which ties into the City of Austin's bicycle network. Simpson talked about how bike share provides solutions for first and last mile connections for those that ride transit, as well as their efforts to place MetroBike stations near trails and multi-modal facilities. As CapMetro adds new MetroRapid bus stops, 7-10 additional MetroBike stations will be built along with them. In addition, CapMetro plans on investing in e-bikes for their future MetroBike stations, after pilot programs showed that e-bikes more than doubled ridership across the transit system.

## JUNE LUNCHEON

### Texas SMARTTrack: Traffic Lights 2.0



The WTS Heart of Texas Chapter welcomed Dr. Amit Bhasin and Mike Arellano as the featured speakers for our June luncheon about Texas SMARTTrack. Dr. Bhasin is the Director of the Center for Transportation Research at the University of Texas-Austin, and Arellano is the Deputy District Engineer for TxDOT's Austin District. According to Dr. Bhasin there are several different transportation priorities at play when it comes to developing SMARTTrack:

- With more than 4,000 deaths and more than 100,000 injuries on the roads each year in Texas, safety is top of mind.
- Mobility is another factor, with more than \$13 billion in traffic delay costs to Texas.
- Autonomy in the transportation sector is also growing exponentially, with the number of AVs in 2030 expected to be eight times higher than in 2021.

Technology is also advancing at a breakneck pace, and mobility "megatrends" driven by the private sector lead to increased testing needs, complexity in their validation methods and approval procedures, and make it difficult for the infrastructure provided by the public sector to catch up. TxDOT partnered with CTR to develop SMARTTrack to:

- Keep Texas at the forefront of mobility innovation.
- Standardize vendors' vetting process.
- Establish a data platform to share with cities, counties, and state agencies.
- Create a sustainable method to react toward future megatrends.
- Collaborate with the private sector to speed up mobility innovations.

SMARTTrack will create operating standards to connect producers and consumers of information, then move to create testing standards to evaluate the efficacy of technologies. After that, researchers will be ready for pilot deployments, demonstrating these technologies' scalability and value. UT's campus will have a testing facility for these technologies and a larger pilot route using several local highways, including MoPac Expressway, SH 45, SH 130, US 183, and SH 71. Right now, teams have completed the conceptual design and a business plan, and they are currently working on schematic design, requirements, and validation strategies.





The June Lattes Lagers & Leadership featured two guests, Somer Shindler, Chief Development Officer at Austin Bergstrom Airport, and Angela Berry Roberson, Senior Vice President/Principal Consultant of Civil Rights Advisory Services and Compliance at WSP USA. Sommer and Angela are both leaders in the transportation industry, and it was interesting to see their diverse paths to leadership as they shared their experiences and insights. They also gave us a heads up about upcoming Industry Days for the AUS airport expansion, visit [austintexas.gov/AEDP-Business](https://austintexas.gov/AEDP-Business) to learn more.



## SAVE THE DATE



**Lindsay Wood, PE**  
**Executive VP of Engineering and Construction**  
**Austin Transit Partnership**

The next L&L will be held on July 20th at 8 am, hosted by Lindsay Wood. Seats will be limited, so RSVP early! Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/4yc9hw3p>

2023 PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

## Lifecycle of a Project

Friday, September 15th at Maggiano's

Keynote Speaker: Cody McGuire

Deputy PM for the Oak Hill Parkway Project

Additional information on other speakers and panelists coming soon!





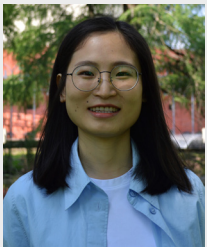


The 19th Annual Transportation Scholarship and Awards Gala was held on June 17, 2023 at the Austin Hilton Downtown. We had a record-breaking more than 400 members of the industry joined us for a “blinging” good time! The WTS HOT Chapter presented eight deserving women with scholarships and six industry awards.



Through the live and silent auction, direct giving, heads or tails game, and other fundraising at the event, we are pleased to announce we raised more than \$95,000 before expenses – a record amount – for the Heart of Texas Foundation. This money goes to support local women pursuing degrees in the transportation field. Thank you to all who joined us at the event and for the generosity of our donors!

## GALA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS



### HELENE M. OVERLY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

**Jinli Liu**  
**Texas State University**

Jinli Liu is currently a Ph.D. student in the Geographic Information Science program within the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Texas State University. In 2021, she completed her M.S. degree in transportation management and planning at Texas Southern University. Prior to that, she obtained my bachelor’s degree and another master’s degree in Transportation Engineering from Zhejiang Normal University, located in Zhejiang, China.



Throughout her academic journey, her research interests have primarily revolved around traffic signal design, statistical analysis, machine learning techniques focusing on safety and transportation operations, and the design and analysis of GIS-based systems. Currently, she is serving as a graduate research assistant at Dr. Subasish Das’s AIT lab, where she has the opportunity to contribute to cutting-edge transportation research.

Ms. Liu is genuinely passionate about making strides in the field of transportation, particularly by improving traffic safety and equity. She believes that through research and innovative solutions, we can positively impact how people experience transportation systems. She is grateful to WTS for granting her this scholarship, which will undoubtedly play a vital role in helping her achieve her career goals. She will use this opportunity to further her education and contribute meaningfully to the transportation field.



### PAULA HAMMOND LEADERSHIP LEGACY FOR GRADUATES

**Anna McAuley**  
**University of Texas at Austin**

Anna McAuley is a Ph.D. student in Transportation Engineering at the University of Texas Department of Civil, Architectural, and Environmental Engineering. Her research is focused on emerging technology in the transportation industry, particularly related to connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV) infrastructure. Her work helps public agencies understand industry trends and opportunities, adopt and deploy technology, and develop strategic policies supporting their long-term goals. She is part of the team leading the Texas Connected Freight Corridors project, a CAV deployment funded by a USDOT ATCMTD grant.

Prior to graduate school, Anna worked for Kimley-Horn and Associates, Arup, and Union Pacific

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Railroad. On campus, Anna is involved in the WTS, ITE, and ITS student chapters and serves as a K-12 STEM mentor. Outside of school and work, she enjoys being outside, gardening and trying new restaurants.



Anna holds a B.A. in Plan II Honors from the University of Texas at Austin, a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin, and an M.S. in Transportation Engineering from The University of Texas at Austin. She is advised by Dr. Randy Machemehl.

Ms. McAuley also won the Jannet Walker Ford Legacy Leadership Scholarship at the international level.

## SHARON D. BANKS MEMORIAL UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP



**Grace Li**

**University of Texas at Austin**

Ms. Li is a rising sophomore at the University of Texas in Austin, and she is majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering. She is interested in working with both robotics and artificial intelligence technologies and seeks to learn more about them throughout her education.

She hopes to work towards integrating systems such as these with public transportation in tandem with the current workers serving the system to create a safer traveling environment for everyone. Her favorite way of giving back to the community is to volunteer at robotics events to encourage the next generation of engineers.

At UT Austin, she is currently an undergraduate member of the ReNeu Robotics lab, where she works on machine learning programs, and also a member of the Robotics and Animation Society RoboMasters Computer Vision team. Grace plans on using the experiences and knowledge gained from these activities to help her advance toward her career aspirations and goal.

## MOLITORIS LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATES



**Kiersten Crespell**

**Texas A&M - Central Texas**

Kiersten Crespell is from Austin, TX, where she attended Lake Travis High School. She is currently a Junior at Texas A&M Central Texas University seeking a bachelor's degree in aviation science, and she aspires to be one of the few female professional airline captains in the industry.

Ms. Crespell is interested in new alternative energy-powered planes (electric and hydrogen-powered) and also wants to be a test pilot for companies developing these new technologies. She believes these technologies and the development of smaller 1-4-person electric planes and drones will help alleviate ground transportation traffic congestion. She wants to help make that change a reality.

## JUNIOR COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP



**Aubrey Ryan**

**Central Texas College, Texas A&M - Central Texas**

Aubrey Ryan is an undergraduate senior studying Aviation Science at Central Texas College and Aviation Management at Texas A&M University - Central Texas.

Aubrey is an instrument-rated private pilot who is finishing flight training to become a commercial pilot. She is a member of the Central Texas College Flight Team and Aviation Association and Women in Aviation International.

After graduation, Aubrey plans to become a flight instructor for a few years to encourage young women to fulfill their dreams of flight. Her career goal is to be an international pilot for a major airline. Aubrey is passionate about researching methods to make aviation more environmentally sustainable. In her free time, Aubrey volunteers at events at the local airport to inspire young women to build a career in aviation.



## TRANSPORTATION YOU SCHOLARSHIP

**Aishwarya Sreenivasan**  
**Liberal Arts and Science Academy, University of Texas at Austin**

Aishwarya will attend the University of Texas at Austin and major in Statistics and Data Science.



At her high school, Aishwarya was the Vice President of the Women+ in Computer Science club, in which she worked to create academic and networking opportunities to increase diversity in the technology field. She is interested in using data analytics to ensure the safe and efficient transport of people in their daily lives by using data-driven approaches to improve traffic and safety and determining strategies to increase sustainability by offsetting carbon emissions by vehicles.

She is extremely grateful to receive this scholarship and is excited to explore career options in transportation.

Outside of school, she enjoys practicing nature photography and learning geography, and her goal is to use technology to enable social and environmental change.

Aishwarya also won the Transportation YOU scholarship at the international level.



## FRIENDS OF WTS SCHOLARSHIP

**Quynhngi Tran**  
**Uplift Summit International Preparatory and University of Texas at Austin**

Quynhngi Tran is an incoming freshman at the University of Texas at Arlington this fall of 2023, pursuing an Honors Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. Quynhngi graduated as valedictorian and an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program student from Uplift Summit International in high school.

Her interest in transportation was first sparked through Texas Youth & Government, where she participated in writing and debating state proposals for sustainable reform regarding development, infrastructure, and transportation throughout high school. Later, she was inspired after reading books by women such as Janette Sadik-Khan and Jane Jacobs, female pioneers of sustainable transportation and development, to fully commit to serving people through civil engineering.

After graduating, Quynhngi hopes to pave a path of change for sustainable development to exist within transportation and infrastructure, both environmentally and economically, within the state of Texas.



## FRIENDS OF WTS SCHOLARSHIP

**Christine Lai**  
**Jersey Village High School, University of Texas at Austin**

Christine Lai is an incoming freshman at the University of Texas at Austin, where she will be majoring in Civil Engineering. She hopes to not only provide quality infrastructure to low-income households but to improve it as well.

As a part of this goal, she wishes to enhance public transportation in her home city of Houston, where traffic congestion and car dependency are huge problems.

Christine was also highly involved in her school choir, including participating in a musical production of Legally Blonde Jr. and becoming a TMEA Region Choir Member. During her free time, she enjoys serving her community through volunteering and leading volunteer organizations.





## INNOVATIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS AWARD



Andrea Bryant  
North Lamar Blvd Improvements Project  
Project Manager

## ROSA PARKS DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD



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



Bill Hasbrook

## WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD



Laura Ryan

## EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD



## MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD



Brittani Kaim



# GALA SPONSORS



Cocktail Hour



Entertainment



Attendee Gift



Dessert



Step & Repeat Photo Booth



360 Video Photo Booth



High Roller Casino Tables

Heads or Tails Game







## Casino Tables



## Dinner Tables



## Auction Donors

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 Summer & Rose  
 The Goodgame Family  
 Tiff's Treats  
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 Twin Liquors  
 Typhoon Texas Water Park  
 Urban Kayaking Tour of Austin  
 Vonda Drees Art  
 Wanderlust Yoga  
 Water2Wine  
 Wish  
 WTS Past Presidents  
 Zach Theatre





For more pictures visit the album link here: <https://www.wts-gala.atxdronex.com/>











## 2023 Upcoming

# events

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>July</b> | 7/12 Networking Event<br>7/20 Lattes & Leadership                          |
| <b>Aug</b>  | TBD Lattes & Leadership<br>TBD CP/AP Members Only Event                    |
| <b>Sept</b> | 9/15 Professional Development Seminar<br>TBD Networking Event              |
| <b>Oct</b>  | 10/18 Monthly Luncheon<br>TBD Bike-n-Brunch                                |
| <b>Nov</b>  | 11/15 Monthly Luncheon<br>11/15-16 WTS International Leadership Conference |
| <b>Dec</b>  | TBD Holiday Networking Event   |

## WTS Job Bank

Did you know WTS has a Job Bank? If you are looking for work or you are a Corporate Partner who would like to post a job, the WTS Job Bank is available to you.

If you'd like to post a job opening, e-mail [communications@wtshotchapter.org](mailto:communications@wtshotchapter.org) with the relevant information and we'll post the job to our Job Bank.

Visit our Job Bank at <https://www.wtsinternational.org/chapters/heart-texas/job-bank>.

