



2023 VOLUME 4  
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# HOT Chapter Newsletter



> Heart of Texas

Advancing women  
Advancing transportation

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## BOARD MEMBERS

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**Tonia Norman**

Retired  
TxDOT

### VICE PRESIDENT

**Laura Friello, PE**

Project Manager  
Garver

### SECRETARY

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### TREASURER

**Seles Johnson, PE**

Senior Transportation Engineer  
Atkins

### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

**Ashley Williams**

Research Administrator  
Center for Transportation Research/UT  
Austin

### COMMUNICATIONS

**Cheryl Goodgame**

Senior Marketing Coordinator  
Lockwood, Andrews, & Newnam, Inc.



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

December is a time for reflection and looking forward. In the WTS Heart of Texas Chapter, we reflect on the many activities that the chapter offered to our members and the greater Heart of Texas transportation professionals community this year. I am thankful that we could come

together as a community to support one another in our professional development, to network and build relationships, and to raise funds to promote the future of transportation through the advancement of women and transportation.

I recently attended the annual Chapter Leadership Development conference hosted by WTS International in Newport Beach, California along with HOT Chapter board members Andrea Bryant (Recognitions), Laura Friello (Vice President), Seles Johnson (Treasurer), and Antionette Roberts (Gala). Together, we heard from other chapter leaders on the ways that they are leading their chapters to provide engaging and meaningful events and volunteer opportunities for transportation professionals and students across the country. We also gathered with the Texas WTS Chapter leaders present for a group photo and shared insights on how we can continue to advance transportation and women in Texas.

At that event, WTS International CEO Sarah Stickler shared the International Board's vision statement on what WTS does. WTS advances transportation, provides professional and workforce development, advocates for gender equity, pursues key legislative and policy priorities that support women and transportation, and builds the future of transportation. Hopefully, each of you, as members and active participants in WTS HOT Chapter events, can see yourself and what we do as a chapter in this statement. It is important work, and we appreciate you engaging with us to achieve it.

All members of WTS should have received an email in early December from WTS International announcing the new membership structure and rates that will go into effect on January 12, 2024. WTS International is making these changes to begin to bring the association's membership rates in line with similar national transportation associations. WTS International has begun that process with this first baseline dues increase and has planned incremental annual increases of 5% per year over the next four years. Beyond the dues increase, the changes to the membership structure move away from dues based on self-reported salary and into more streamlined and logical membership categories: student (no fee), professional (dues based on employing organizational type), executive (dues based on employing organizational type), and lifetime (for those who are retired but still wish to remain engaged with WTS and its mission). Visit the [membership page](#) on the WTS



## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

### CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP

**Patty Trujillo, PE, MCE**

Transportation Engineer  
Atkins

### GALA CO-CHAIRS

**Lisa Loftus-Otway**

Research Scientist  
Center for Transportation Research  
UT Austin

**Antionette Roberts**

Project & Office Administrator  
DKS Associates

### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

**Pooja Patel, PE, LGPP**

Civil Engineer  
Kimley-Horn

### MENTORING CHAIR

**Lynn Isaak, PE, MBA, PMP**

Engineering Services Director  
Foresight Planning & Engineering

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Christen Eschberger, PE**

Project Director  
HNTB

### PROGRAMS CHAIR

**Laurie Simmons, APR**

Strategic Communications and Public  
Involvement Project Manager  
AECOM

### RECOGNITIONS CHAIR

**Andrea Bryant, PE**

Transportation Project Manager  
Freese & Nichols

### REGIONAL COUNCIL

**Jackie Sartor**

Business Development Director  
Foresight Planning & Engineering

### SCHOLARSHIP CO-CHAIRS

**Brittani Kaim**

Communications Marketing Manager  
WSP

**Stephen Johnson, PE**

Project Manager, Central Texas  
Transportation Leader  
Garver

### STUDENT LIAISON CO-CHAIRS

**Madelyn Krieger**

Engineer  
Freese & Nichols

**Max Hoffman**

Planner II  
HNTB

### TRANSPORTATION YOU CO-CHAIRS

**Ashley Martinez, PE, LGPP**

Kimley-Horn  
Civil Engineer

**Kelly Rees, PE**

Kimley-Horn  
Transportation Engineer



International website for more information. If you have any questions about these changes, please don't hesitate to contact me at [president@wtshotchapter.org](mailto:president@wtshotchapter.org).

Please take time to review the summaries of this fall's WTS HOT Chapter activities in the rest of the newsletter. Our next in-person event will be the annual business meeting on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, where the chapter leadership will provide a review of 2023 and preview the events planned for 2024. Please plan to join us again then. And, don't forget to save the date for our 20th Anniversary Awards and Scholarship Gala, scheduled for Friday, April 26, 2024. We'll be sending out more details about that special event in January, so stay tuned.

As we close out 2023 and look forward to 2024, I thank the members, event attendees, corporate sponsors, agency partners and affiliates, speakers and panelists, and volunteers for helping to make our chapter's 2023 events possible. I extend a special thanks to the 2023 WTS HOT Chapter Board and their committees for the dedication of their time and talents this year. Please join me in showing your appreciation for the following chapter leaders who are stepping down from the board at the end of the year: Lisa Loftus-Otway (Gala); Lynn Isaak (Mentoring); and Laurie Simmons (Programs).

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Wishing you health and happiness in 2024,

Tonia Norman  
President

## 2023 CHAPTER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The annual Chapter Leadership Development conference, hosted by WTS International, was held in Newport Beach, CA on November 15th - 16th, 2023. WTS HOT board members Andrea Bryant (Recognitions), Laura Friello (Vice President), Seles Johnson (Treasurer), Tonia Norman (President), and Antionette Roberts (Gala) attended and snapped this photo with other Texas Chapter leaders. The event focused on chapter leader development — practical and tactical organizational skills, board responsibilities and governance, contract management for events, communications best practices, and opportunities to become proficient in your roles and responsibilities.



Representatives from Texas WTS Chapters



WTS HOT Chapter Representatives



Advancing women  
Advancing transportation  
Heart of Texas



Student Members	Professional Membership				Executive Membership			Lifetime Membership
	Emerging Leader	Public Sector	DBE/Small Business	Private Sector	Public Sector	DBE/Small Business	Private Sector	
\$0								One Time Fee
	\$75 USD/ \$100 CAD	\$115 USD/ \$165 CAD	\$160 USD/ \$220 CAD	\$200 USD/ \$280 CAD	\$275 USD/ \$350 CAD	\$315 USD/ \$390 CAD	\$350 USD/ \$450 CAD	\$350 USD/ \$450 CAD

## LATTES AND LEADERSHIP

### July Lattes and Leadership, Lindsay Wood, PE



The July Lattes & Leadership featured Lindsay Wood, past WTS HOT Chapter President (2017-2018), who is the Executive Vice President of Engineering & Construction at Austin Transit Partnership (ATP). She shared her path from being an architectural engineer to taking on a leadership role in the transit industry, including her relatively recent transition from the private sector to public sector. Lindsey also shared some leadership lessons, such as tactics to keep your team inspired, leadership traits, and networking tips. (My favorite: Join and lead a WTS committee!)

### August Lattes and Leadership, Heidi Ross



Heidi Ross of CTR was the special guest at Lattes & Leadership in August. Heidi walked us through her career journey in planning and traffic engineering, including her time as majority owner of WHM, which more than tripled in size under her leadership. In her current position as Assistant Director for the Networking Modeling Center and Strategic Planning Manager at the UT Center for Transportation Development (CTR) Heidi has been working on Texas SMARTTrack, and she gave an overview of the three tiers of testing that will be available in and around the Pickle Research Center. Heidi offered some great career tips including "If you know what you're doing, you're not growing," and "Get a mentor. Be a mentor."

## Navigating NEPA: Insights on the Council on Environmental Quality's Phase 2 Rulemaking Process”



In October 2023, the WTS Heart of Texas Chapter hosted its monthly luncheon, featuring insights from Doug Booher, TxDOT's Director of Environmental Affairs Division, who shared thoughts on the Council on Environmental Quality's Phase 2 rulemaking process for NEPA. This comprehensive phase follows the Phase 1 rulemaking in 2021, which aimed to reverse some changes introduced in 2020 under the Trump administration. Notably, this marks a significant shift, as prior to 2020, the rules had remained stable since 1978. Stakeholders were encouraged to submit comments by the end of September 2023, with anticipation that the rules will come into effect around April 2024.

Mr. Booher shared that the proposed rules were not only becoming longer and more complex, with an approximate 15% increase in length, but also introduced several new administrative requirements. The changes suggest a trend towards making Categorical Exclusions (CEs) more akin to Environmental Assessments (EAs) and EAs more similar to Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). He shared the following proposed changes supported by him and his team and proposed changes they disagree with.

### SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED CHANGES:

40 CFR 1502.9(b): The proposed revision clarifies that the decision to prepare a supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is at the agency's discretion. This change ensures that the agency responsible for the DEIS determines whether supplementation is necessary.

40 CFR 1502.11 (g): The proposal to remove the requirement to include the estimated cost of preparation on the cover of an EIS is welcomed by Doug and his team. This requirement, added in 2020, was deemed challenging to calculate due to the various internal and external staff involved over several years.

### NOT-SUPPORTED PROPOSED CHANGES:

Several proposed changes in the Council on Environmental Quality's Phase II Rulemaking for NEPA were met with disapproval from Doug and his team. Firstly, the instruction (40 CFR 1501.4(b)(1)) to publish CE determinations with "extraordinary circumstances" but no significant effects is critiqued for its circular definition and potential confusion amid numerous annual CEs. Secondly, the requirement (40 CFR 1501.7(a), 1501.9(c)(1)) to formally designate participating and cooperating agencies on EAs is criticized for blurring the line between EAs and EISs, potentially complicating the process. Additionally, the proposed necessity (40 CFR 1501.12) to "briefly explain the relevance of the incorporated material to the environmental document" is deemed unnecessary, as existing rules are considered sufficient. The suggestion (40 CFR 1502.14(a)) that EIS explores alternatives beyond the lead agency's jurisdiction is questioned for its potential to waste time and resources. Other not-supported changes involve issues like the removal of the provision on scientific research (40 CFR 1502.23(b)), the requirement for a ROD on mitigation (40 CFR 1505.2(c)), and the complexity of defining "environmentally preferable alternative" (40 CFR 1508.1(l)), which raises concerns about meeting multiple objectives outlined in Section 101 of NEPA.

The upcoming months are crucial as stakeholders engage in the commenting process to shape the final rules. The changes hold implications for environmental assessments and impact statements, influencing project evaluations and decision-making processes. Stay tuned for further updates as the rulemaking process unfolds!



As we wrap up another successful year filled with professional luncheons and seminars, CP/AP programs, and exclusive networking events, our WTS Heart of Texas Membership committee chair, Pooja Patel (Kimley-Horn) hosted the annual members-only WTS Holiday Party at the new Bouldin Acres – Braker on December 13th to celebrate our achievements and continued commitment to our chapter. Members kept warm with their Ugly Holiday Sweaters (jinglingly and lighting all around), enjoyed cool drinks and hot chocolate with a splash of spike, gathered for laid-back networking and delicious food, complete with tacos and sliders! Those in attendance entered in a door prize drawing for one of our three \$75 gift cards (TJ Maxx/HomeGoods/Marshalls, Uber, Spa/DSW/Nordstrom Rack/Macy's/Ulta) and those rocking their crafty sweaters were also entered in a drawing for a \$75 Visa as well. Congratulations to our door prize winners and Jackie Sartor for the most festive ugly sweater!

This annual event gives the WTS HOT chapter an opportunity to engage with our members and reflect on the successes over the year, while aiding in the continued growth of our chapter through expanded services and offerings to our membership. Thank you to all of our membership and partnerships that have made 2023 one for the books and hope to continue the momentum in 2024!



## Lifecycle of a Project

The 2023 Professional Development Seminar, "Lifecycle of a Project" covered the entire project lifecycle, from project prioritization to maintenance and the many steps in between! Keynote speaker Cody McGuire gave a great presentation covering the entire 30+ year lifecycle of the Oak Hill Parkway project, including challenges that were overcome and how the community input drove many design decisions. Speakers from both the public and private sectors provided insight into specific portions of the project lifecycle. Two panels of agency experts discussed planning in the highway, transit, and aviation industries, and gave us a peek into maintenance and operations at different agencies.



## SPEAKERS/PANELISTS

### Keynote Speaker

**Cody McGuire, PE** (Oak Hill Parkway Design-Build Deputy Project Manager, TxDOT)

### Prioritization/Funding

**Ashby Johnson** (Executive Director, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO))

### Planning Panel

**Moderator: Cynthia Long** (Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 2 and Chair of CAMPO Transportation Policy Board)

**Lorena Echeverria De Misi** (Manager, Corridor Planning Branch, TxDOT Transportation Planning & Programming Division)

**Jennifer Pyne** (Executive Vice President of Planning & Risk Management, Austin Transit Partnership)

*continued*



## Planning Panel (continued)

**Jennifer Williams, PE** (Planning and Development Supervisor, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport)

## Environmental Clearance

**Susan Chavez** (Texas Environmental & Planning Leader, Garver)

## Public Involvement

**Lynda Rife** (Founder and President, Rifeline)

## Design

**Bethany Garretson, PE** (San Diego Area Manager/Principal PM, Mott MacDonald)

## Utility Relocation

**Sandee Houry, PE** (Executive Vice President and Utility Coordination Discipline Lead, Cobb Fendley)

## Construction

**Ben Engelhardt, PE** (Director of Construction, TxDOT Austin District)

## Maintenance Panel

**Moderator: Stephanie Russell, PE** (Project Manager, Garver)

**Brenda Guerra, PE** (Director of Transportation Operations, TxDOT Austin District)

**Angela Johnson, PE** (City Engineer, City of Austin)

**Matt Williamson, PE** (Maintenance & Operations Engineer, Williamson County)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

You are cordially invited to the

*20th*

*WTS HOT Chapter Annual Scholarship & Awards Gala*

Friday  
April 26, 2024 | 5:00 PM

A black-tie fundraising dinner  
Hyatt Regency Austin | 208 Barton Springs

For CP tables, please contact Antoinette Roberts at [galacc@wtshotchapter.org](mailto:galacc@wtshotchapter.org)

Early bird pricing:  
Member \$200  
CP Table \$2,000

Gov/Student/Retired \$190  
Couples \$360

Includes dinner, drinks, auction, and entertainment.



# 2024 Upcoming

## *events*

- Jan** 1/17 Annual Business Meeting
- Feb** 2/22 Monthly Luncheon
- Mar** 3/20 Monthly Luncheon
- Apr** 4/17 Monthly Luncheon  
4/26 20th Annual Scholarship & Awards Gala
- May** 5/8-10 WTS International Annual Conference  
5/15 Monthly Luncheon
- June** 6/19 Monthly Luncheon  
6/25-29 WTS Capital Summit
- July** TBD Lattes & Leadership
- Aug** TBD Lattes & Leadership  
TBD CP/AP Members Only Event
- Sept** TBD Professional Development Seminar
- Oct** 10/7-12 WTS Signature Leadership Training  
10/16 Monthly Luncheon  
TBD Bike-n-Brunch
- Nov** 11/14-15 WTS International Leadership Conference  
11/20 Monthly Luncheon
- Dec** TBD Holiday Networking Event