

WTS
Minnesota Chapter
2023 Annual Report

January 2024



> Minnesota

Advancing women
Advancing transportation

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WTS Minnesota Mission

Transforming the transportation industry through the advancement of women.

Message from the President

The 2023 WTS Minnesota Board of Directors is pleased to provide our members with the chapter's 2023 Annual Report. The report provides a summary of the chapter's activities, growth, and accomplishments over the past year.

The 2023 board included 11 directors, 17 committee chairs, and one Central Region Council member. Our chapter's robust leadership allows our chapter to provide new initiatives, while improving and expanding our established programs. This has been a rewarding year to serve as chapter president as we pushed the chapter into new offerings, brought new faces into the mix, and maintained the warmth and inclusiveness associated with WTS. I'll be honest, I went into the year with some trepidation—will I be able to be president of this beloved organization that does so much? Every month our board members reminded me of their dedication. It's the president's job to run the board and the board's job to deliver on our mission. And deliver they did. There is so much to be proud of and share about WTS in 2023. This year's highlights included:



- The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee led by Emma Lucken and Jennifer Wiltgen put the WTS Minnesota Land Acknowledgement Plan into action with several first-of-our-kind programs this year including an African American Women in Transportation panel; Learning from Place: Bdote Workshop in partnership with APA Minnesota and ASCE Minnesota; and a family-friendly dreamcatcher-making event. In addition to bringing so much richness to our programs, the DEI committee also continues to examine and shape other parts of the chapter's offerings—like our scholarship review criteria, which will be changing in 2024 to give preference to qualified applicants of color.
- Our monthly programs continue to be WTS's bread and butter and are consistently educational, welcoming, and fun. I met someone new at every single event I attended this year and am grateful to Erin Jordan and Karen Scheffing for their programs leadership, along with chair Allie Futhey and the volunteers, presenters, tour guides, and other volunteers who make the whole enterprise hum.
- Saying "I'm not crying you're crying!", an annual tradition at our spring Scholarships and Recognitions event, held this year at the top of the IDS Center. We came, we listened, we were inspired and will be back again. My thanks to Emily Bowen for her thoughtful leadership and growth of the scholarship program this year—watch for two new scholarships in 2024 thanks to a partnership with MSES—and to Daniel Baxter and Alicia Valenti our special events mavens.
- Finally, our chapter continued to grow and work well because of the tireless work of our board members whose jobs are a little more behind the scenes. My thanks to Eden Rogers who has been a treasurer and tremendous resource to the board for the last five years; Jackie Dylla who gracefully collects the generous contributions of our corporate sponsors and has continued to grow the sponsorship program during her time on the board; and Carrie

Desmond who transitioned our Public Partner Pilot Program into a permanent fixture this year.

There is so much more to say about WTS Minnesota in 2023—read on for a summary of it all. It is through the involvement of our members and friends, volunteers, and board leadership that allows our chapter to grow and improve year after year. It has been an honor to serve as the 2023 Minnesota chapter president, and I am humbled by the dedication of this group that works tirelessly to support the WTS Minnesota mission of transforming the Minnesota transportation industry through the advancement of women.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adele Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Adele Hall
WTS Minnesota 2023 Chapter President

Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Adele Hall, SRF Consulting

VICE PRESIDENT

Lisa Elliott, Minnesota Department of Transportation

PAST PRESIDENT

Lyssa Leitner, Washington County

TREASURER

Eden Rogers, Washington County

SECRETARY

Rachel Haase, Kimley-Horn

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Jackie Dylla, KLJ

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Maddie Garces, SRF Consulting

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Catherine Judd, HDR

PROGRAMS DIRECTORS

Erin Jordan, SEH

Karen Scheffing, Bolton & Menk

SCHOLARSHIPS & RECOGNITIONS DIRECTOR

Emily Bowen, Kimley-Horn



2023 WTS Minnesota Board Members

Committee Chairs

DEVELOPMENT

Carrie Desmond, Metro Transit

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Emma Lucken, Ramsey County

Jennifer Wiltgen, Minnesota Department of Transportation

MEMBERSHIP

Nicole Bitzan, SRF Consulting

MENTORING

Michelle Kahl, Kismet Consulting

Caroline Miller, HDR

Ashley Morello, Hennepin County

PROGRAMS

Allie Futhey, Isthmus Engineering

Dany Maloney, HDR

REGIONAL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

Sara Pflaum, Minnesota Department of Transportation

SOCIAL MEDIA

Kate Hvizdos, Bolton & Menk

SPECIAL EVENTS

Daniel Baxter, Michael Baker International

Alicia Valenti, Metro Transit

SUSTAINABILITY

Lauren Lynch, AECOM

TRANSPORTATION YOU

Melissa Duhn, Baun Intertec

Laura Melcher, WSB Engineering

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Angie Bolstad, Stantec

WEBSITE

Sara Allen, Washington County

Advisory Board

Morgan Abbott, Washington County

Laura Amundson, WSP

Kristin Asher, City of Richfield

Biz Colburn, Retired

Sandy Cullen, University of Minnesota Parking & Transportation Services

Margaret Donahoe, Minnesota Transportation Alliance

Chelsey Hendrickson, Kimley-Horn

Gloria Jeff, Minnesota Department of Transportation

Ann Johnson, PE Services

Jessica Laabs, Kimley-Horn

Scott McBride, Bolton & Menk

Kristina Nesse, Radical Soul Coaching

Amber Nord, Isthmus Engineering

Katie Roth, Metro Transit

Fay Simer, Minnesota Department of Transportation

Molly Stewart, SRF Consulting

Kristin Thompson, Metro Transit

Amy Vennewitz, Metropolitan Council

HunWen Westman, City of Saint Paul

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee for the Minnesota Chapter of WTS meets monthly and develops content for programs and trainings and advocates to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the transportation industry.

The DEI Committee's mission is to develop skills and knowledge within WTS Minnesota members to be advocates in individual workplaces to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the transportation industry and to increase and support diversity within WTS Minnesota membership, leadership, and program participants to better reflect our communities.

As a part of this mission, our committee has been very active in implementing programs that expand knowledge of issues related to underrepresented groups within the transportation industry. This past year, a subcommittee called the Land Acknowledgement Action Plan Subcommittee formed to develop and initiate action on WTS Minnesota's Land Acknowledgement. As a part of this plan, the subcommittee offered three separate events including a roundtable discussion in December 2022, partnership with Minnesota APA and ASCE to offer the Bdote Workshop to members, and a dreamcatcher making event. Members of the subcommittee also presented their Land Acknowledgement Action Plan at the Midwest Regional Conference.

Another program that the committee offered was "The Women Who Are Making History Today" event at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center on February 28th. This event featured a panel discussion among African American women transportation leaders in the Twin Cities. The event highlighted their experiences, challenges, and hopes for the future and included leaders from the private, public, and legislative perspectives.

In addition to events and programs, the DEI Committee also initiated a professional development grant, specifically targeted to women that identify as black, indigenous, or as women of color. This \$2,500 grant was offered both to members and non-members to expand reach to the greatest amount of recipients.

Finally, the DEI Committee continues to make progress on its workplan and identifying new programs and trainings to offer to our WTS membership. Some programs we have identified to work on for the next year include another program with the Humanities Center, a Disadvantaged Business and Targeted Group Business fair or program, and more programs associated with our Land Acknowledgement Action Plan.

Membership

The 2023 membership goals included:

- Ease renewal process
- Pair honorary member with programmed event
- Make Membership Director/Chair more visible and accessible

Starting the year off with 145 active members, the chapter gained 32 new members in 2023. Thank you to everyone that joined as a new member and to all our existing members for helping share the value of the organization with their colleagues.

WTS International initiated membership restructuring in 2023 and sought input and feedback from chapters. The chapter hosted a dialog regarding how proposed changes will impact our chapter's budget, individual members, and the diversity of our membership. The chapter developed feedback based on the discussion. The Minnesota Chapter provided input on how the proposed restructuring may impact members and expressed a need to engage emerging and developing professionals, retain retired professionals, and improve the ease of renewal while clearly communicating changes in membership pricing and structure.

The Connect with Coffee program continued to be a successful tool to engage new members in 2023. We offered this program to new members to meet a WTS member over coffee both virtually and in person. Since the creation of the Connect with Coffee program in 2015, numerous pairs were connected, and the program has continued to grow. Feedback from participants showed members really appreciated the opportunity to connect with others in the industry through this program and identify opportunities to get more involved with the chapter.

Membership Spotlight featured members in the chapter newsletter. Individuals with diverse perspectives were featured and invited to share a photo, brief biography, and a few words about why they are members and what transportation means to them. Profiles included new members, long-term members, and a DBE business owner.

Membership invited honorary candidates that align with the chapter's mission to foster public partnerships and synergy with organizations with similar values. The chapter invited Lesley Kandaras and Nene Israel to become WTS honorary members in 2023. Lesley Kandaras has served as Metro Transit's general manager since July 2023. She came to Metro Transit in 2019 and has held senior leadership roles including chief of staff and interim general manager. Nene Israel is a member and ambassador to WTS Minnesota from COMTO and is an Accounting Supervisor at the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA).

Membership's goal to pair the honorary members with a program impacted the timing of featuring each honorary member, and with a full programs calendar for 2023 both events will occur in Q1 and Q2 of 2024. A fireside conversation with Metro Transit's first woman General Manager, Lesley Kandaras, will be hosted in January 2024. Based on coordination with COMTO members, both organizations identified similar barriers in professional settings where the game of golf is featured. Therefore, a joint program that seeks to reduce barriers to the game while fostering opportunity for networking and learning more about MVTA as a regional transit agency is proposed in spring 2024.

Mentorship

The Mentoring Co-Chairs organized a mentorship program that extended from November 2022 through August 2023. We had 18 participants that were matched into nine mentor/mentee pairs. In addition to individual meetings, group events included a virtual kick-off event, a happy hour, and a wrap-up event.



Mentorship Program Wrap-Up Event in August 2023

Programs

JANUARY 2023 | NAVIGATING YOUR TRANSPORTATION CAREER PANEL DISCUSSION

We kicked off our 2023 programming with an engaging panel discussion surrounding equity, career paths, and achieving professional goals. Our five panelists were industry leaders who represent the public, private, and non-profit sectors. They shared their perspectives, advice, and professional journeys to help us reflect on ways to build stronger, more equitable, and inclusive professional communities, navigate career challenges, and achieve our personal career goals. This virtual event was moderated by Programs Co-Directors Karen Scheffing (MnDOT) and Erin Jordan (SEH) with panelists Abdullahi Abdulle (Transportation Equity Planning Corridor, MnDOT), Anjali Bains (Lead Director of Energy Access and Equity, Fresh Energy), Becca Hughes (Senior Transportation Planner & Senior Associate, Stantec), Katie Toghramadjian (President and Founder, Isthmus Engineering), and HunWen Westman (Traffic Engineer, City of Saint Paul).

FEBRUARY 2023 | JOINT ACEC EMERGING PROFESSIONALS/WTS "POLITICS IN ENGINEERING" EVENT

Held jointly with the Minnesota Chapter's ACEC-Emerging Professionals committee, WTS members and friends gathered at the Green Mill to listen to a panel discussion with Senate Higher Education Chair Senator Sandy Pappas (SD 65, DFL) and Former House Capital Investment Chair Rep. Dean Urdahl (HD 16A, R). Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and listen to strategies each panelist had regarding infrastructure funding and how proposed legislation might affect the engineering industry, how to get involved with your local representatives, and other issues that were important at the Capitol this session.

FEBRUARY 2023 | THE WOMEN WHO ARE MAKING HISTORY TODAY

The DEI Committee hosted this event at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, featuring a panel discussion among African American women transportation leaders in the Twin Cities. More information on this event is included in the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion section.

MARCH 2023 | MNDOT REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT CENTER TOUR

Our March program of MnDOT's Regional Transportation System Management Center (RTMC) was organized by Karen Scheffing (Co-Programs Director), Dany Maloney (Programs Co-Chair), and Jackie Nowak (Programs Committee Member). Attendees joined WTS Minnesota for a tour of the RTMC, which was led by Tiffany Dagon, MnDOT's RTMC Director. We learned about Tiffany's diverse and interesting career and all about how the RTMC operates and responds to incidents. Following the tour, attendees were welcome to join for a happy hour event at the nearby High Pines Brewery.

APRIL 2023 | SCHOLARSHIPS AND RECOGNITIONS EVENT

The April event was our annual Scholarships and Recognitions event, a summary of which is included in the Scholarships and Recognitions section.

MAY 2023 | TRAIL WALK WITH MINNEAPOLIS PARK BOARD

The weather was perfect May 22nd as our WTS Minnesota chapter hosted a Cedar Lake-Lake of the Isles Trail Walk, highlighting the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's (MPRB's) master plan process. The MPRB published its draft of the master plan in January 2023. The family and dog-friendly walk was led by Emma Pachuta, Senior Planner with MPRB.

JUNE 2023 | SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PRESENTATION AND TOUR

Meeting at Hennepin County’s Hosmer Library, Erin Jordan (SEH) presented alongside Maria Wardoku (Alta Planning + Design) on how communities can plan and implement successful Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Demonstration Projects – emphasizing the need for strong collaboration between stakeholders and not being scared to try new things to create safer systems for children to walk and bike to school. A “walking school bus” was led to the nearby MnDOT SRTS demonstration project at Minneapolis Green Central Elementary School, showing off the temporary raised crosswalk, two-way bikeway, and curb extension features along E 34th Street (extending between Clinton Avenue and Park Avenue), a great project example that is building a safer connection to the school, adjacent bikeways, and other key destinations in the area.

JULY 2023 | JOINT SUMMER SOCIAL WITH MSES, WTS, ITS-MN, AND NCITE

Take us out to the ball game! With nearly 200 attendees, our WTS members and friends had a great opportunity to socialize with MSES, ITS-MN, and NCITE at the July 25th Saints baseball game. It was a hot night on the field and the home team’s bats were even hotter with the Saints bringing in a 14-7 win. Thanks to all the members and friends who helped make this event possible!

AUGUST 2023 | BOARD RECRUITMENT MEETING AND HAPPY HOUR

WTS Minnesota members and friends were invited to join the August board meeting to learn more about the organization and being on the board. After the meeting we walked down to Dual Citizen Brewery to enjoy some drinks, food from nearby Spicy Feta, and networking.

SEPTEMBER 2023 | LEARNING FROM PLACE: BDOE WORKSHOP

Members and friends joined together to experience an all-day workshop sponsored by WTS Minnesota and in partnership with the APA and ASCE Minnesota chapters. As one of the first events outlined in our Land Acknowledgement Action Plan established by the DEI Committee, we were excited for this opportunity to learn from Ethan Neerdaels and Ramona Kitto Stately of the Minnesota Humanities Center. Participants braved the rainy fall weather to participate in this unique event to develop a deeper understanding about Dakota people’s relationship to Minnesota and understand the negative impact exclusion from the state’s history and narrative have had on Dakota individuals and communities. WTS Minnesota was able to donate the registration fee proceeds from the workshop to the following organizations: [We Are Still Here](#), [Dakhóta iápi Okhódakičhiye](#), and [MIGIZI](#).

OCTOBER 2023 | DREAMCATCHER MAKING EVENT

WTS members and their families gathered at Braun Intertec’s Bloomington location to enjoy a presentation by Michelle LaGarde about dreamcatchers and their importance to Native American culture. Folks enjoyed a fall meal from the Pow Wow Grounds and made their own dreamcatchers to take home.

NOVEMBER 2023 | “CLICK AND CONNECT” PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOT EVENT

Professional headshots help our members and friends create good first impressions and market themselves and their work. In November, WTS Minnesota was proud to host an opportunity where members and



Dreamcatcher Making Event

friends could connect and get professional headshots done. Thank you to all who attended the event and thank you to our hosts at the Gatherings at Station 10 for providing a welcoming and well-lit space.

DECEMBER 2023 | HOLIDAY PARTY

The 2023 WTS Minnesota Holiday Party was held on December 21st at the Science Museum of Minnesota. Members and friends gathered for delicious food, a cash bar, and great company! The event also included a cash raffle, members-only gift card drawing, and silent auction.

Transportation YOU

CAPITAL SUMMIT RECAP

WTS Minnesota Chapter had the privilege of attending the WTS Capital Summit this summer with two mentees from Blaine High School. WTS International hosts this one-of-a-kind program to gather Transportation YOU mentor/mentees from across the country for a week of panels, leadership and team building, tours, and hands-on activities that showcase transportation careers. This year 27 high school mentees and 18 mentors were able to attend and hear from diverse professionals as well as visit the US Department of Transportation, Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, Maryland Port Administration, Federal Highway Administration Turner-Fairbanks Research Center, Amtrak at Union Station, the Capitol, and a Potomac River boat ride. This is an incredible experience for the mentees to learn about the various careers available but to also make valuable connections with their peers across the nation and begin to establish their professional networks.

Scholarships and Recognitions

On April 20th, more than 150 WTS Minnesota members and friends gathered at Windows on Minnesota to celebrate the 2023 Scholarship and Recognition award recipients. Through our scholarship program, WTS is proud to support the burgeoning careers of young women entering the field of transportation as well as career growth for established professionals. With our annual recognition awards, we are also thrilled to celebrate individuals who exemplify WTS's core values of collaboration and inclusivity, dedicating themselves to creating access and equity for women and other underrepresented groups in our field. Congratulations again to the 2023 winners!

PAST PRESIDENT AWARD

Lyssa Leitner (Washington County)

Lyssa Leitner, AICP, has served in multiple positions on the WTS Minnesota Board – including President, in 2022. She has been a transportation planner with Washington County for the past decade and is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs. She is currently the Planning Director for the County.



Lyssa has a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from the Humphrey School and was named one of Mass Transit Magazine's Top 40 Under 40 in 2016.

MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Jennifer Wiltgen (Minnesota Department of Transportation)

Jennifer has worked in transportation planning for over 10 years in various capacities. Most recently, she has worked at the Minnesota Department of Transportation as a planner, area coordinator, and planning program coordinator. She has been involved with WTS over the years through the Transportation YOU program and most recently the DEI Committee.



A message from Jennifer:

I am honored to have been chosen as a WTS Member of the Year and to join many inspiring Members of this year and years' past, including fellow D&I committee members Michelle LaGarde, Emma Lucken, and Gloria Jeff. For the past three years, I have been fortunate to work alongside so many passionate people. As a volunteer driven organization, the strength of our committee stems from the efforts of our volunteers. Our members are not only interested in furthering the goals of the chapter, but also passionate about fostering an inclusive community and promoting actions that move our industry to more equitable outcomes. Co-Chairing our Diversity and Inclusion Committee has provided me with the opportunity to join a community that I am proud to be a part of.

With a full heart, I thank you-

Jennifer

Michelle LaGarde (Braun Intertec)

Michelle obtained her B.A. in Environmental Science and Geology from the University of Minnesota, Morris, and M.S. in Earth Sciences from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She is a current Advisory Board member for the Earth & Environmental Sciences Department at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. As a Staff Scientist in the transportation group at Braun Intertec, her current professional focus includes an emphasis on geological site assessments and site remediation. Michelle is an enrolled member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe.



Michelle has been actively involved in the DEI Committee's work ever since joining WTS in March of 2022. Michelle's work with the WTS Minnesota Land Acknowledgement and Action Plan, the December Native American Heritage Roundtable and Discussion Event, and the Bdote Tour has led to initiatives that expand the knowledge of members about tribal nations and indigenous communities in Minnesota. Her participation in the DEI Committee has provided her with the opportunity to get to know, and build connections with, other professionals in the transportation industry. Michelle is proud to be a member of the WTS Minnesota Chapter, which is filled with professionals with a wide range of backgrounds and provides various opportunities for members to develop skills and advance their careers. She encourages other young professionals to join the organization so they can expand their professional network and increase their knowledge about the transportation field.

WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger (Minnesota Department of Transportation)

Nancy Daubenberger has worked for the Minnesota Department of Transportation for over 23 years in engineering and management positions and was appointed by Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan as the agency's Commissioner in May 2022, after serving for over two years as Deputy Commissioner and Chief Engineer and re-appointed to Commissioner in 2023.



Prior to her Deputy Commissioner role, she served as the Assistant Commissioner for Engineering Services, State Bridge Engineer, and also previously served in planning, project management, and design roles for the MnDOT Bridge Office and Metro District. Before coming to MnDOT, she worked in consulting for six years, in both bridge and road design.

Nancy is a native of Minnesota and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from North Dakota State University in addition to a master's degree in Civil Engineering (with a structural emphasis) from the University of Minnesota. In 2022, she was appointed by Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan as the Chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, and co-chairs both the Governor's Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council and Governor's Advisory Council on

Connected and Automated Vehicles. She is the current President of the Mid-America Association of State Transportation Officials and serves on the Board of Directors for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. As a member of AASHTO, she serves as the Chair for the Committee on Right of Way, Utilities and Outdoor Advertising, and Convenor of the Inter-Committee Working Group on Electric Vehicles. She also serves on the Professional Advisory Board for the University of Minnesota's Department of Civil, Environmental and Geo Engineering.

Nancy and her husband reside in Woodbury, Minnesota, where they raised their daughter and son.

WOMAN TO WATCH AWARD

Laura Kearns (Washington County)

Laura began her career with Washington County in 2014. In 2019 she was named interim Fleet Manager and was recently promoted to Fleet Manager in 2022. During her time Laura has been instrumental in organizing and improving workflow processes. By empowering fleet technicians to make decisions, she has increased accountability and responsibility. Laura has initiated additional checks and balances by updating the current parts room. Adding a barcoding system has resulted in a more accurate inventory of all parts used on County equipment. Laura oversees the County's six fuel depots located throughout the County by ensuring that state and federal regulations are met. Laura works collaboratively with all departments throughout Washington County to ensure that positive relationships are maintained, purchasing needs are met throughout the County, and by making sure all County policies and state and federal guidelines are followed. Laura is currently the only female Fleet Manager within the seven-county metro area.



In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, and boating on the St. Croix River.

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Minnesota Department of Transportation

When it comes to employee professional development and creating career pathways for women, MnDOT truly stands apart. MnDOT administers numerous workforce development programs to support women and employees at every career stage. MnDOT hosts five Career Pathway Programs designed to recruit, develop, and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce. MnDOT employees can participate in a women's employee resource group (Strategic Women Advancing Transportation or SWAT), find a mentor or sponsor through MnDOT's Mentorship and Sponsorship program, tailor their professional learning through high quality trainings in the Leadership Development Program (LDP), or participate in the Mobility Program to take on new roles in the agency. Not to mention, we believe MnDOT to be the only DOT in the nation to be led by an all-female executive team!



MnDOT is a public sector sponsor of WTS Minnesota. Eleven MnDOT employees are members, three serve on the chapter board, two serve on the advisory board, and numerous MnDOT employees and projects have been proud recipients of past WTS recognitions.

ROSA PARKS DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Abdullahi Abdulle (Minnesota Department of Transportation)

Abdullahi Abdulle is a transportation planner, veteran of the Minnesota Army National Guard, and a councilmember in the city of New Brighton.

Abdullahi works for the Minnesota Department of Transportation as a transportation equity planning coordinator. He leads the agency's Advancing Transportation Equity Initiative. This is an effort that was created to study and address the different ways the transportation system and associated decision-making processes affect the lives of underserved and overburdened communities in Minnesota. He led statewide efforts to define transportation equity and develop agency commitments and directives to create a more equitable transportation future that centers on the needs of most marginalized communities in Minnesota. The resulting equity imperatives were imbedded in MnDOT's Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan to inform transportation decision making.

As a councilmember, Abdullahi pushes for people-centric policies on everyday issues that improve people's quality of life. Abdullahi has been involved in creating the City's first diversity, equity, and inclusion policy and plan, paid parental leave, climate action plan, and improving housing conditions among other initiatives.

Abdullahi has a master's degree in urban planning and a bachelor's degree in construction management from Minnesota State University, Mankato.



INNOVATIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS AWARD

Metro Transit micro, Meredith Klekotka, Victoria Dan, and Sheila Holbrook-White (Metro Transit)

Metro Transit micro launched in September 2022, piloting public, on-demand ridesharing in North Minneapolis. Operationalizing equity principles, micro provides app-enabled, curb-to-curb service via ADA-accessible mini-buses to residents of a historically diverse and vibrant urban community with different transportation needs from traditional suburban ride-sharing models. Offsetting gaps in existing transit, charging local bus fares, and connecting passengers seamlessly to METRO C and D arterial BRT lines for regional travel, micro provided 11,600 rides in its first six months of operation. With a recent expansion that doubled the service area, micro offers critical connections to retail, specifically to groceries, to public and charter schools, and to important community resources, including food shelves, parks, and worship communities, often serving multiple supportive housing communities designed for older adults, persons with disabilities, and low-income families.



Explicitly removing traditional silos, micro has leveraged the strengths of its primary partners: Metro Transit, with project initiation and management through launch led by Shared Mobility Program

Manager Meredith Klekotka and ongoing service planning and project management of Senior Planner Victoria Dan; Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS) and ongoing operational and project management by Program Manager Sheila Holbrook-White; and vendors VIA and Transit Team.

HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD AWARD

Adrian Potter (SRF Consulting)

I am honored and grateful to have been nominated and awarded the Honorable Ray LaHood Award from WTS Minnesota. This recognition means a great deal to me – I have been helped and guided by many outstanding professionals during my career, so I cherish the chance to pass along that kindness and support to women and minorities in transportation. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions and support of my colleagues, mentors, family, and friends who have encouraged and inspired me to help lift others as I keep trying to climb towards success. This award is a testament to their belief in me and unwavering support. I remain committed to continuing my work in transportation and advancing opportunities for equity in this vital field. I appreciate those who nominated me and WTS for sponsoring this award.



WTS MINNESOTA GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

Maya Sheikh (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities – Humphrey School of Public Affairs)

I am a graduate student at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs pursuing dual degrees in urban and regional planning and public health. Before graduate school, I worked for a U.S. Senator in D.C., and currently work for a statewide advocacy and education non-profit called the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN). My research interests are focused on cultivating access for active transportation across Minnesota and supporting equitable policies and community engagement in planning. As a research assistant the Transportation Policy and Economic Competitiveness (TPEC) program, I have been fortunate to research innovative right-of-way uses by studying various projects nationwide and analyzing disparities in telecommuting during the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm deeply honored by this recognition from WTS and eager to continue my career in transportation and public health alongside so many terrific advocates and leaders. Thank you!



DONNA ALLAN UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

Raissa Natacha Ineza (Minnesota State University, Mankato)

I am a sophomore pursuing a civil engineering degree at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU). In the past, I interned as a Project Management Intern at the Minnesota Department of Transportation, managing the scoping and planning processes. At MNSU, I serve through internships, leadership, supplemental academic instruction, and volunteering activities.

I look forward to a future where I can use my civil engineering background to build safe, resilient, and sustainable infrastructure systems.



KATHERINE TURNBULL LEADERSHIP UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

Julie Olson (University of Minnesota, Duluth)

My name is Julie Olson, and I am a junior at the University of Minnesota Duluth, studying Civil Engineering with an emphasis in transportation engineering. I am most interested in the traffic engineering side of transportation, and I am excited to spend my career improving the safety and efficiency of roadways. I have served as the president of the Duluth Transportation Student Organization (DTSO) for the past year, working to get this student organization moving again after the worst of the pandemic. I want to thank WTS Minnesota for investing in my future in transportation!



DAN MEYERS HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP

Greta Gersema (Watertown-Mayer High School)

Hi, I am Greta Gersema, and I am a senior at Watertown-Mayer High School. I am proud to be involved in many activities at school. I played varsity soccer, and I was in the pit orchestra. I am also in student council, knowledge bowl, math league, ecology, Special Olympics, mock trial, and letters of love. Furthermore, I am the secretary for my school's National Honor Society chapter. I will be attending Iowa State University in the fall, and I will be majoring in Civil Engineering. I am excited to continue my education and start working on America's future transportation.



WTS MINNESOTA PRESIDENT'S SCHOLARSHIP

Michelle Julius (Mitchell Hamline School of Law)

Michelle is pursuing her Juris Doctor (J.D.) from Mitchell Hamline School of Law in Saint Paul. She received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Wisconsin – Platteville. After graduation, Michelle worked for a civil construction contractor in Chicago, primarily working on public utility projects in the heart of downtown. In 1999, Michelle and her family returned to the Twin Cities and have been living in Woodbury (where she is originally from) ever since. Michelle is a Vice President at AECOM (previously BRW, Dames & Moore, and URS), where she has worked since 1999. She has spent much of her career in the transportation construction public sector market in the Twin Cities metro area. Her areas of expertise include project management, construction administration, and risk management. Michelle has wanted to pursue a law degree for many years, with the goal of helping public sector clients manage their construction contracts.



Conferences

WTS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The WTS International Conference was held in Atlanta, Georgia in 2023. WTS Minnesota subsidized conference attendance for five of our members who submitted requests, including the chapter president. Additional WTS members from Minnesota attended as well, and we were well represented at the conference. The scholarships and awards gala was a highlight of the conference, and WTS Minnesota was recognized at the event as a “Gold” chapter (the highest standing) for our consistent reporting to WTS International.

WTS CENTRAL REGION CONFERENCE

The WTS Central Region Conference was hosted in Chicago, Illinois in 2023. The Minnesota Chapter supported conference subsidies for five members who submitted requests, including the chapter vice president and MnDOT Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger who was part of the Keynote Plenary for the conference with other DOT leadership and discussed goals, impacts, and funding for passenger and freight rail though the region. Attendees had opportunities to learn from speakers about



2023 Regional Conference Attendees

transportation topics, mobility, safety, funding, and delivery mechanisms as well as engage in discussions about challenges faced by others and shared experiences. Attendees had the opportunity participate in a number of events to expand their professional networks and meet other regional WTS members including a Chicago architecture river boat tour, small dinners, and a hosted dinner event.

CHAPTER LEADER TRAINING

The WTS Chapter Leader Training was held in Newport Beach, California in 2023. WTS Minnesota subsidized training participation for three Minnesota Chapter leaders representing membership, programs, and DEI. Training and best practice modules educated participants about WTS tools and resources and were complemented by speaking and large group presentations that were both interactive and engaging. Attendees were expected to expand WTS connections by alternating seating through each module to foster introductions and engagement with multiple attendees. Participants found value in learning more about their roles and counterparts in other regions but also from the opportunity to learn more about one another.



WTS Minnesota Representatives at Chapter Leader Training

Financial Report

INCOME

Membership Dues	\$5,500
Monthly Programs	\$2,725
Holiday Party	\$11,000
Scholarships & Recognitions Event	\$2,671
Miscellaneous	\$0
Corporate and Public Partnerships	\$38,600
TOTAL	\$60,496

DONATIONS TO SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Scholarship Donations	\$1,000
TOTAL	\$1,000

Individual Donors

- Donna Allen
- Katherine Turnbull

EXPENSES

Monthly Programs	\$7,285
Travel/Board Member Training	\$13,130
Transportation YOU Capital Summit	\$3,500
Supplies/Communication	\$800
Membership Development	\$250
Professional Development Fees (AICP)	\$1,254
Insurance	\$1,158
Scholarships & Recognitions Event	\$12,302
Holiday Party	\$14,200
Transportation YOU	\$330
Mentoring Program	\$700
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	\$3,300
TOTAL	\$58,209

Corporate and Public Partners

All the accomplishments in this report would not be possible without our Corporate and Public Partners. WTS Minnesota's Corporate Partnership Program began in 2012 with just one firm. In 2023, we reached **28 corporate and four public partners** who have committed a combined **\$36,800**. Those contributions have greatly advanced the chapter's educational, scholarship, and leadership programs. WTS Minnesota recognizes that financial backing is only possible with strong voices expressing why this is a valuable organization, so we thank the following organizations and their people for their support in 2023.

ADVOCATE LEVEL PARTNERS



SUPPORTER LEVEL PARTNERS

American Engineering and Testing, Inc.
Bolton & Menk, Inc.
HR Green
ISG
Michael Baker International
TKDA

PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS

City of Saint Paul
Metro Transit/Metropolitan Council
Minnesota Department of Transportation
Washington County

SMALL BUSINESS/DBE PARTNERS

Anderson
HZ United
Isthmus Engineering
LV Engineering
Pierce Pini & Associates
PE Services
Sambatek
Stonebrooke
The Transportation Alliance
Zan Associates



› Minnesota

Advancing women
Advancing transportation