

NEWSLETTER



President's Message

As my term as President of WTS Central Florida comes to a close, I can't help but reflect on what an incredible journey 2024 has been. It's been a year of progress, collaboration, friendship, and unforgettable experiences.

I want to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to our Sponsors. Your unwavering support has fueled our mission of empowering women in transportation. Your generosity has opened doors, created opportunities, and strengthened our community. We are grateful for your belief in our vision.

To our Committee Members, you are the heart and soul of this organization. Thank you for bringing your creativity, expertise, and passion to every initiative. Your hard work has pushed us closer to a future where the inclusion of women leaders reflects excellence and is the norm.

To our Members, your energy and engagement make all the difference! Through your participation in events, discussions, and programs, you've built a supportive community that continues to inspire us all. We couldn't do this without you!

Thank you to the Central Florida community for embracing our mission and standing with us on this journey. Your encouragement and collaboration have been instrumental in breaking barriers and fostering equality in the transportation sector. Together, we are creating a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

Serving as your President has been a true honor. I'm so proud of what we've accomplished together and excited about the path ahead. I invite you to keep the momentum going: consider becoming a sponsor, attending an event, or following and engaging with us on social media.

With an energetic and talented new Board of Directors at the helm, I'm confident that 2025 will be a year of growth, impact, and success. I can't wait to see what's next for #WTSCFL!

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Stacey Russell

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2024 President, WTS Central Florida

2024 BOARD

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Rebecca Bess | DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP: Margelis Rangel
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Congratulations to our 2025 Board of Directors!

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Sarah Larsen
President
MetroPlan Orlando



Negaar Minaei, PTP
Vice President
CDM Smith



Fatema Hoque Frazana, PE, PTOE, RSP1
Secretary
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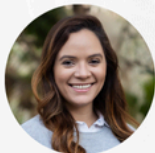
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Annie Gennaro
Director of Professional
Development
TransCore



Kenza Sersouri, PE
Director of Programs
KEITH

The 2025 Board of Directors has already hit the ground running, kicking off the year with a productive retreat focused on collaboration, planning, and setting goals for the upcoming year.



Recent Activities

Coffee Conversations: Building Bridges

WTS Central Florida hosted a Coffee Conversations event titled "Building Bridges from Stumbling Blocks." The session explored strategies to empower LGBTQ+ professionals, overcome workplace biases, and highlight the importance of mentorship.



WTS and UF Transportation Symposium

On November 1st, WTS Central Florida Chapter partnered with the UF Transportation Institute for a highly successful symposium. Attendees explored the future of next-generation transportation through engaging presentations, insightful discussions, and thought-provoking questions. A big thank you to the speakers and participants for making this event such a success!

Discovering SunRail Program (November 15, 2024)



Members explored SunRail's newest station during the "Discovering DeLand" program. Attendees enjoyed a train ride from Lake Mary to DeLand, a station tour, and lunch at 4th Street Bar & Grill. Thanks to SunRail and the program coordinators for a fantastic event!



Virtual Book Club: "When Driving Is Not an Option"

Members enjoyed exploring Anna Letitia Zivarts' book, "When Driving Is Not an Option," which emphasized the need for accessible transportation and its role in environmental health and climate change.

The September 12 discussion sparked thoughtful insights and engaging conversations. Special thanks to Felipe Andres Monsalve, P.E., MBA, PMP for leading this successful session!

WTS CENTRAL FLORIDA

2024 BANQUET RECAP

The **WTS Central Florida Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet**, held on December 4, 2024, was a night of celebration, honoring the outstanding achievements of transportation professionals, leaders, and future industry pioneers. The event highlighted the chapter's continued success in advancing women in transportation through scholarships, professional development, and leadership recognition. With over 200 active members, the chapter awarded six scholarships to deserving students pursuing careers in transportation-related fields and recognized industry leaders for their contributions to innovation, diversity, and regional growth.

Keynote speaker Michelle Maikisch, Executive Director of the Central Florida Expressway Authority, delivered an inspiring address on leadership, innovation, and collaboration in shaping the future of transportation. The evening reflected the WTS Central Florida Chapter's dedication to fostering an inclusive, forward-thinking transportation community and showcased the impact of fundraising events like Swings for Scholarships and Chips for 'Ships.



SCHOLARSHIP & AWARD WINNERS

The WTS Central Florida Chapter awarded six scholarships to empower the next generation of transportation leaders:

Transportation YOU High School Scholarship (\$1,000):

Cassidy Reale, Seminole High School
(Pursuing Aviation).

Undergraduate Leadership Scholarship (\$2,000):

Zoey Cole, University of Central Florida
(Civil Engineering).

Graduate Leadership Scholarship (\$2,000):

Sanjida Irqa, University of Central Florida
(Transportation Engineering).

Junior College/Trade School Scholarship (\$1,500):

Lydia Martinez, Lake Technical College
(Diesel Systems Technology).

Undergraduate Scholarship (\$2,500):

Yoharic Corrales, University of Central Florida
(Civil Engineering).

Graduate Scholarship (\$3,500):

Alyssa Lenkel, University of Florida
(Environmental Engineering).

The banquet also recognized leaders who have made significant contributions to the industry:

Innovative Transportation Solutions Award:

Visitor Toll Pass Program led by Angela Melton
(Central Florida Expressway Authority).

Member of the Year:

Snehal Ambare,
CDM Smith.

Honorable Ray LaHood Award:

Dana Chester,
Jacobs Engineering.

Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award:

Virginia Whittington,
MetroPlan Orlando.

Citizen Transportation Advocate of the Year:

Kayla Mitchell,
Bike/Walk Central Florida.

Harold W. Barley Regional Partnership Award:

Central Florida
Expressway Authority.

Employer of the Year:

The Balmoral Group.

Woman of the Year:

Michelle Maikisch,
Central Florida
Expressway Authority.



2025 CHAPTER OPEN HOUSE

JANUARY 22, 2025 | 5:30–7:30PM

AZALEA LODGE AT MEAD GARDEN

Kick off the beginning of the year with WTS Central Florida's annual Open House! Join us for an opportunity to network with industry professionals. Plus, meet the chapter's committee chairs and 2025 board of directors. Enjoy appetizers and drinks while learning how to maximize your WTS membership.



REGISTER AT:

<https://www.wtsinternational.org/events/2025-chapter-open-house>

Join WTS

We would love to have you join us! To start your membership with WTS, go to our website using the QR code or URL below.

SCAN QR CODE OR USE URL:

<https://www.wtsinternational.org/chapters/central-florida>



CLICK ON JOIN WTS BUTTON

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OR SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW



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Stay connected with all things WTS Central Florida by following us on all social media. Be sure to use the hashtag #WTSCFL in any of your chapter- related posts! We love to see and share your WTS content.



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