

HOT CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

WTS HOT Chapter Newsletter September 2026 | Volume 3



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President's Letter



Happy Fall from the WTS Heart of Texas Chapter!

As we move into the final quarter of 2026, I'm incredibly proud of what our chapter has accomplished together. From networking and leadership development to recognizing transportation professionals and inspiring future engineers, our members continue to make a meaningful impact across Central Texas.

None of these accomplishments would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, committee leaders, corporate partners, and members who continuously invest their time and energy in our chapter.

To stay connected between events, be sure you're subscribed to chapter [emails](#) and following WTS Heart of Texas on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#). Our communications team regularly shares event announcements, registration opportunities, member achievements, and chapter news.

Quarterly Highlights

July

- Our Membership Committee hosted a Bowling Night Social on July 15 at Highland Lanes. Members enjoyed an evening of networking and camaraderie, creating new connections and strengthening existing relationships across the transportation industry.
- The month wrapped up with our third Lattes & Leadership event, featuring Williamson County's new County Manager, Rebecca Clemons, at Waterloo Coffee Company in Round Rock on July 30. She reflected on her career journey, sharing both professional experiences and personal insights that have shaped her leadership approach.

August

- The last Lattes & Leadership session of the year was held on August 26 at Leona Botanical Cafe & Bar, where we had a conversation with TxDOT Austin District Advanced Project Development (APD) Director, Megan Dutton. Members enjoyed an engaging discussion about her career experiences, leadership journey, and perspectives on serving the transportation needs of Central Texas.
- Our Corporate and Agency Partners Committee hosted the Heart of Texas Chapter's Annual Appreciation Event for Corporate and Agency Partners and Members at the Archer Hotel on August 27. During this event, we honored four everyday trailblazers in Central Texas who are key in moving transportation forward for our communities.
 - **Farideh Dassi**, Senior Transportation Planner at TxDOT
 - **Ana Seivert**, PMP, Capital Delivery Project Manager at City of Austin
 - **Jo Namayanja**, PMP, IT Project Manager at CapMetro, and
 - **Jessica Kintz**, PE, Senior Engineer at the City of Cedar Park



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September

- Our Annual Professional Development Seminar was held on September 18 at Maggiano's, bringing together transportation professionals from across Texas to discuss active transportation initiatives, digital delivery, AI applications, and strategies for supporting our multi-generational workforce. The event featured a variety of presentations and panel discussions focused on the future of transportation in Texas.
- Our TransportationYOU Committee also hosted a table at the Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller. This was a great opportunity to raise awareness of our organization and engage with students, parents, and community members interested in transportation careers.

Check out our whole newsletter for highlights and photos of all these events.

Upcoming Events

We have several exciting opportunities remaining this year, including volunteer events, professional programs, networking opportunities, and our annual holiday celebration.

October

- Our October Luncheon at Maggiano's will have multiple speakers including Brenda Guerra from TxDOT, Kristin Pipkin from Austin TPW, Tracie Brown from CTRMA, Alvin Livingstone from ATP and Nirav Ved from CAMPO discussing the CTX GO initiative. Registration will be opening soon.
- Our Fall Members-Only Event will feature cake decorating at Over the Top Cake Supplies on October 27. Event registration has opened to members, but registration is required two weeks in advance, so grab your spot and join us for this inaugural event!
- We're also continuing to partner with CASITE as we plan an Austin Community College Engineering Panel in October. The date and location will be announced soon.

November

- Our CASITE partnership continues on November 6 and 13 at Norman-Sims Elementary, where we'll participate in a STEM Day and MMC Tour.
- We'll hear an update from the U.S. Department of Transportation during our November 17 luncheon at Maggiano's.

December

- Stay tuned for information regarding our Winter Volunteer Event and Annual Holiday Party. Dates and locations will be announced soon.

Check out the full newsletter for event highlights, photos, member and Corporate Partners spotlights, and more chapter updates.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support of the WTS Heart of Texas Chapter. Whether you've attended an event, volunteered your time, sponsored a program, or simply stayed connected with our chapter, your involvement helps make our organization successful. If you'd like to become more involved through a committee, volunteer opportunity, or event, we'd love to hear from you. We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event as we close out another successful year together.

Laura M. Friello

Laura Friello, PE

President, WTS Heart of Texas Chapter



Bowling Night Social

Thank you to everyone who joined us for a fantastic evening at Highland Lanes for our WTS Membership Bowling Social!

One of the many benefits of WTS membership is the opportunity to connect with fellow transportation professionals outside of the workplace. Events like these provide a relaxed and fun environment to build meaningful relationships, expand professional networks, and strengthen our WTS community.

Members enjoyed great conversations, plenty of laughs, and some friendly competition on the lanes. It was wonderful to see both familiar faces and new members coming together to connect and engage with one another.

A special thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the evening such a success. We look forward to seeing you at our next membership event and continuing to grow the valuable connections that make WTS such a vibrant and supportive organization.



Corporate Sponsor Highlight



Jaclyn Willis

Jaclyn Willis is a Section Manager in Burns & McDonnell's Transportation Global Practice, leading the Austin team to support the design and construction of infrastructure across Texas. She works closely with clients, project managers, and multidisciplinary teams to deliver transportation projects for local governments and agencies, TxDOT, and private-sector clients. Her experience includes roadway design, project management, team leadership, business development, and proposal strategy.



Jaclyn has built a reputation for her commitment to delivering high-quality work and providing excellent client service. While completing her MBA coursework, she discovered her passion for career development and leadership. Specifically, she enjoys helping team members identify their strengths and build confidence in their careers. Her leadership approach reflects Burns & McDonnell's employee-owned culture and her commitment to building a strong team that drives business growth.

JULY LATTES & LEADERSHIP



Rebecca Clemons has worked for Williamson County in various positions throughout her 20 years with the County, including her current role as County Manager. At Lattes & Leadership on Thursday, July 30th, she shared an honest and energetic look at navigating the seasons of life as a working mom with a demanding schedule, emphasizing communication, flexibility, and being upfront about what you need from a job. With two kids, a self-employed husband, and responsibility for multiple departments, she described how she prioritizes each day through lists, delegation, and structured time with room for inevitable “fires.” She spoke about finding purpose beyond work while still loving public service, explaining her role in county leadership—balancing financial stability, safety, infrastructure, technology, and communication while treating department directors as peers and maintaining strong relationships. Rebecca highlighted day-to-day habits like staying focused in meetings, active listening, and removing distractions, and she shared insights on strategic planning, mental health initiatives, diversion programs, and innovative efforts like the death investigator pilot. She discussed how consultants can support counties, the importance of recognizing people, and her passion for solving problems and generating new ideas—from reorganizing departments to improving animal shelter education. Ultimately, she described the biggest challenge as simply not having enough hours in the day, but staying grounded by checking in on people, stepping away from her desk for the “fun things,” and keeping the county moving forward through collaboration and thoughtful leadership.



AUGUST LATTES & LEADERSHIP

Megan Dutton shared how her lifelong interest in engineering—sparked by her engineer father—led her to study civil engineering at UT and begin her career during the difficult 2009 job market, ultimately spending nine years in dam safety at TCEQ before moving into water resources at Halff and later returning to TxDOT, where she now thrives in a leadership role. She described her “just do it” attitude, her commitment to supporting her team, and her focus on honest communication, clear expectations, and regular check-ins to inspire younger staff and manage workloads. Megan reflected on lessons learned and emphasized the value of public-sector experience for developing well-rounded engineers. She looks for humility, eagerness to learn, and strong personality fit when taking chances on new hires, and she offered advice to younger professionals to stay open, show up, and embrace not knowing everything. She also shared memorable dam inspection stories, challenges like balancing personal commitments with work, and her excitement about bringing a new environmental supervisor onto the team.



CP/AP & MEMBERS ONLY EVENT

Thank you to everyone who attended our 2026 CP/AP Event, where we proudly recognized four exceptional transportation professionals as our **Everyday Trailblazers: Driving Forces in Transportation: Farideh Dassi (TxDOT), Ana Seivert, PMP (City of Austin), Jo Namayanja, PMP (CapMetro), and Jessica Kintz, PE (City of Cedar Park)**. Throughout the evening, our honorees shared insights from their professional journeys, reflected on the mentors and colleagues who helped shape their careers, and highlighted the importance of leadership, perseverance, and service. Their stories served as a powerful reminder that trailblazing isn't always about being in the spotlight. It is about making a lasting impact through everyday actions that help move our communities and transportation industry forward. Join us in celebrating their outstanding contributions and the inspiration they provide to future transportation leaders.



Corporate Sponsor Highlight



Susan Chavez

Garver Planning and Environmental Practice Leader Susan Chavez has more than 28 years of experience helping navigate complex environmental and planning challenges in transportation projects.

Since joining Garver in 2020, she has become a firm owner and now leads a team of 30 planning and environmental professionals across Texas and beyond. She collaborates closely with project teams and clients to deliver successful results, drawing on her expertise in identifying project risks and developing strategies to avoid potential issues before they impact project delivery.

An active member in the WTS Heart of Texas chapter since 2006, she is passionate about advancing women in transportation and leading by example for the next generation of professionals. This is visible through her involvement in WTS programs such as the Mentorship Roundtable and Professional Development Seminar where she was a guest presenter.

Susan credits connecting with other women in the industry through numerous networking events, luncheons, and other WTS opportunities as the most rewarding aspect of her involvement, and continues to stay engaged, giving back to the professional community that helps women grow and succeed.

Corporate Sponsor Highlight



Samantha Kaschel

For Samantha Kaschel, her 13 year career at Halff has always been about making an impact. From her early days as an environmental professional to her role today leading a team of natural resources and NEPA specialists, she has helped shape projects across Texas while investing in the growth and success of those around her.

Known for her collaborative approach and enthusiasm for what she does, Samantha is passionate about creating successful outcomes for clients while helping the next generation of professionals grow and succeed. She works with TxDOT districts, local governments and transportation agencies across Texas to navigate complex

environmental requirements and keep critical infrastructure projects moving forward. In her role, Samantha oversees project strategy, schedules, budgets and quality control while guiding multidisciplinary teams through environmental studies, public involvement efforts and NEPA documentation for transportation projects statewide.

Beyond project delivery, Samantha has been involved in WTS for over a decade, regularly attending events and supporting women in the industry. Within Halff, she is a highly-involved champion of the Halff Community Initiative (HCI), the firm's 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to giving back to the communities where employees live and work through donations and volunteer service. Samantha regularly volunteers her time and encourages others in Halff's Austin office to get involved, reflecting her belief that meaningful impact extends beyond the workplace. Her contributions earned her firm-wide recognition as the "HCI Outstanding Volunteer" award recipient for 2026!

Colleagues and clients alike value her attention to detail, responsiveness, and collaboration. As one TxDOT client noted following the successful completion of a major transportation project, "It's been a pleasure working with y'all on this. I wish all projects were this smooth." Through her technical expertise, leadership and dedication, Samantha makes a positive impact on transportation and environmental projects across Texas.

Transportation YOU Committee



On September 27th, the Transportation YOU committee hosted a booth at the Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller to spread awareness about the committee and connect with potential parents and students in the community.



Corporate Sponsor Highlight



Kimley»Horn
Expect More. Experience Better.

Marissa Bell

Based in Austin, Marissa Bell is an engineer-in-training at Kimley-Horn specializing in utility coordination and subsurface utility engineering (SUE). She supports transportation and infrastructure projects across the State of Texas. Marissa serves a diverse range of clients including public agencies, such as TxDOT, local municipalities, regional mobility authorities, and private developers. Her expertise includes utility conflict analysis, risk mitigation, and stakeholder coordination, helping project teams identify and resolve utility challenges before they impact design or construction. Some notable projects include the TxDOT Austin district-wide utility coordination on-call project, where Marissa has helped manage 24 concurrent utility assignments ranging from survey and SUE deliverables to full-scale utility mapping, coordination, and relocation engineering. She has also helped manage and deliver multiple SUE projects ranging from local ADA work to 20-mile-long corridors.

Marissa is passionate about improving accessibility, enhancing public safety, and delivering infrastructure that better serves communities. She believes that effective utility coordination and SUE are key to reducing construction risks, minimizing disruptions, and supporting the successful delivery of transportation projects.

Marissa currently serves as a WTS Heart of Texas Chapter Membership Chair where she is dedicated to connecting, supporting, and empowering women in the transportation industry. She enjoys helping members build meaningful professional relationships and ensuring they have access to the resources, opportunities, and network needed to grow and succeed throughout their careers. She is also a 2025 graduate of the WTS Mentoring Program, where she furthered her interest and participation in the organization that lead to her current position. In addition to her involvement with WTS, Marissa serves as a regular volunteer with Austin Habitat for Humanity. Outside of work and volunteer activities, she enjoys traveling and spending time with her dog.



wsp

Alejandra Lopez, P.E.

Alejandra is a transportation planner and professional engineer at WSP USA, working in the Advisory and Planning Business Line on diverse transportation projects across Texas. She has supported TxDOT, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and cities on studies ranging from local planning efforts to statewide initiatives, bringing a comprehensive, cross-disciplinary perspective to transportation planning. Her current work includes the TxDOT Freight Mobility Plan, where she leads the analysis of the Space Industry (yes, rockets!), exploring what the growing industry means for the Texas transportation network.

Before joining the WSP Texas Planning Team, Alejandra supported WSP's Aviation Planning Practice across the Midwest, contributing to projects for small, medium, and international airports while pursuing her master's degree in Civil Engineering at Purdue University.

Alejandra began her career in Bogotá, Colombia, a vibrant city of more than 10 million people in the metropolitan area and a global leader in innovative urban mobility, from its pioneering Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system to more than 420 miles of cycling infrastructure. As part of the Mobility Planning Division at the Bogotá's Secretariat of Mobility, she developed transportation and mobility initiatives in collaboration with international partners, including the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), with a focus on creating more sustainable and innovative mobility solutions.

Alejandra also serves on the WTS Heart of Texas Chapter's CP/AP Committee, where she enjoys creating opportunities to celebrate, connect, and learn from the women shaping Central Texas' transportation industry.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

Future Ready Texas: *Digital Transformation, Mobility & Workforce*

Speakers:



Anh Selissen, TxDOT
Chief Information Officer



Caitlin D'Alton, City of Austin

Division Manager for
Active Transportation and
Street Design



Ana Seivert, City of Austin

Capital Delivery Project Manager



David Bemporad,
Great Springs Project
Chief Programs Officer



Riley Sandhop,
CapMetro
Government Affairs
Intern



Erica Ortiz, PE, HNTB
Transportation Engineer



**Lynn Isaak, PE, PMP,
MBA, Au+ Engineering**
Executive Vice President



Jacob Tambunga, PE,
TxDOT
Director of Digital Delivery



Nirav Ved, CAMPO
Data and Operations
Manager



UPCOMING EVENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER

Austin Community College Engineering
Panel in collaboration with CASITE

Date & Time TBA

OCTOBER 16

Mentoring Graduation



OCTOBER 21

Monthly Luncheon

Maggiano's in The Domain, 11:30 AM



OCTOBER 27

Members Only Cake Decoration Class

*Over the Top Cake Supplies,
9070 Research Blvd #203, Austin, TX 78757
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM*



NOVEMBER 6

STEM Day at Norman-Sims Elementary
School in collaboration with CASITE

NOVEMBER 13

MMC Tour at Norman-Sims Elementary
School in collaboration with CASITE

NOVEMBER 17

Monthly Luncheon

Maggiano's in The Domain, 11:30 AM



DECEMBER

Holiday Networking Event

Location, Date & Time TBA



2026 CORPORATE & AGENCY PARTNERS

PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



2026 CORPORATE & AGENCY PARTNERS

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