

Message from the President

Sirisha Pillalamarri, PE, PTP

Transcend Engineers & Planners, LLC, WTS Houston President



Wishing all the WTS member families much cheer this holiday season.

As we celebrated our twentieth anniversary year in 2024, we brought several interesting and rejuvenating programs to you. It was a busy year with member engagement events, professional development, monthly luncheons, joint events with multiple other professional organizations and a fabulous scholarship and awards gala.

Your contributions and sponsorships enable us to emphasize and accelerate women's careers in the transportation industry. I am honored to serve as a President to this wonderful Chapter for 2024 - 2025 term with committed volunteers, dedicated board of directors and generous sponsors.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sirisha".

Sirisha Pillalamarri, PE, PTP
President, Houston Chapter

2024 Professional Development Event



2024 Leadership Tea



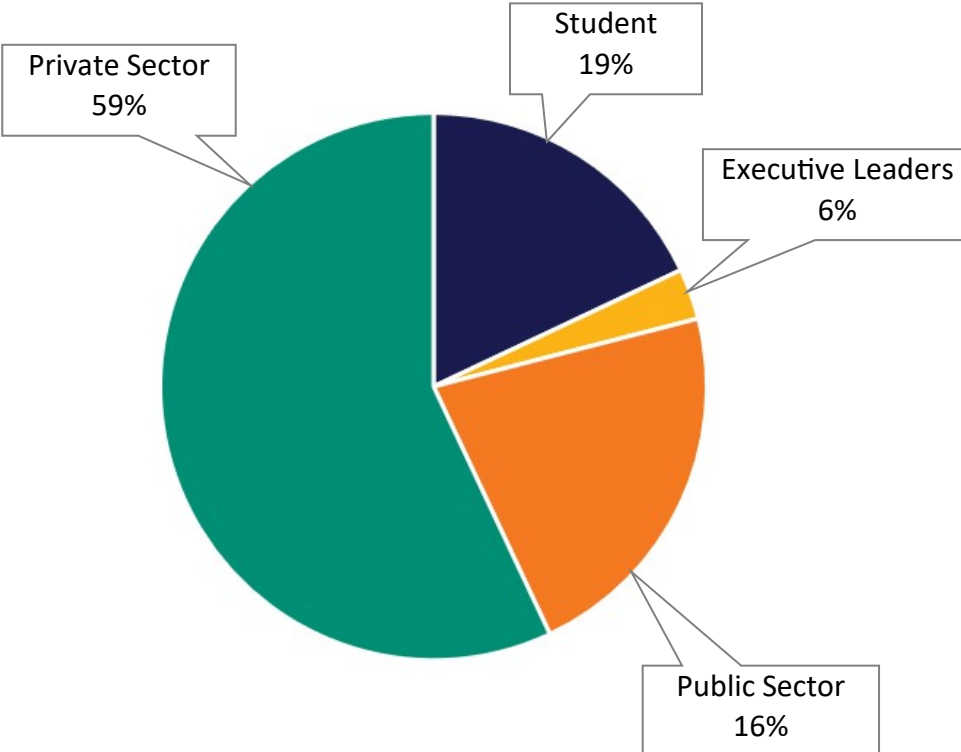
2024 WTS Houston Scholarship & Awards Gala



WE ARE WTS HOUSTON...



WTS Houston Membership Profile



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- | | | |
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Amma Cobbinah, <i>METRO</i></p> | |

MISSION WTS attracts, sustains, connects and advances women’s careers to strengthen the transportation industry.

2024 Event Highlights

WTS Houston Leadership Tea

The WTS Houston Chapter hosted its first Leadership Tea at the Royal Sonesta on Friday, September 27th. This event brought together individuals at all stages of their careers, from students to seasoned professionals, to discuss leadership, career development and ways to address our region's future transportation needs. This unique format featured round-table discussions led by an industry leader with a maximum of five participants. Participants were pre-assigned three tables, for a short, twenty-minute discussion at each table. Discussions covered a wide range of topics, from career paths outside of engineering to the importance of peer-to-peer relations and maintaining professionalism.

The event provided an opportunity to have discussions with industry leaders from both the public and private sector, representing the different modes of transportation and the various disciplines that work in the transportation industry. This provided event participants with the opportunity to broaden their perspectives and learn from each other's experiences. *We are immensely grateful to our event sponsor, Halff, and our Tea Pot Sponsors, ASH&E LLC., Landtech, and HNTB. Your generous support made this event possible! We also want to thank our Industry Leaders for facilitating the table conversations and all the participants for their active engagement. Your efforts and participation were truly appreciated.*



Industry Leaders

- ◇ **Donna Adams**, VP and Senior Business Development Director, AtkinsRéalis
- ◇ **Rhonda Arnold**, Business Affairs Officer, Houston Airport System
- ◇ **Karen Coopersmith**, Environmental GL, Client Service Leader, Jacobs
- ◇ **Felicia Harral**, Director, Engineering Services, Calhoun Port Authority
- ◇ **Jeanne Jullien**, Vice President, UES
- ◇ **Barabara Koslov**, Client Services Manager, Ardurra
- ◇ **Carol Lewis**, PhD, Professor and Emeritus Director of CTR, Texas Southern University
- ◇ **Amanda Marshall**, Assistant Director Capital Projects, Harris County Pct. #2
- ◇ **Alisa Max**, VP, Community Infrastructure, Pape-Dawson Engineers
- ◇ **Delia Mizwa**, Director of Marketing & Communications, Uptown Houston District
- ◇ **Ujari Mohite**, Chief Transit Oriented Development Program Officer, METRO
- ◇ **Catherin McCreight**, Director of Transportation Planning, TxDOT
- ◇ **Josie Ortiz**, Capital Improvements Project Manager, HCTRA
- ◇ **Katherine Parker**, Executive Director, Gulf Coast Rail District
- ◇ **Sue Theiss**, Director of Advanced Project Development, TxDOT
- ◇ **Leilany Thielen**, Deputy Director Capital Projects & Infrastructure, HCTRA
- ◇ **Jessica Wiggins**, Community Planning Manager, Harris County Pct. #4
- ◇ **Darrin Willer**, Executive VP, National Transportation Business Line Leader, DCCM
- ◇ **Joe Zimmerman**, Mayor City of Sugar Land

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



June Panel Discussion



Graduation



September Panel Discussion

By Sara Coffey, Pape-Dawson, Mentorship Committee

The WTS Houston Chapter's Mentorship Program just finished its seventh year with its largest group to date with thirty-two mentees and mentors in this year's program. The program focuses on professional development and growth for all participants, mentors and mentees alike. Mentees and mentors were paired based on professional interests and career focus areas. Events included career development panels and monthly one-on-one meetings with mentors and mentees.

Highlighted events included discussions and panels focusing on specific professional development topics. In June, the Mentorship program hosted a Career Panel which featured Patee Bean (HNTB), Barbara Koslov (Ardurra) and Atri Sen (Resalire). The panelists highlighted the importance of planning, work/life balance and shared their personal career experiences. In July, the mentees learned about Self-Advocacy and Salary Negotiation with a panel featuring Emily Anderson (Halff), Stephanie Gulliot (ISANI), Donna Adams (Atkins-Realis), and Aileen Morey (WSP). At this event, mentees learned tips on how to negotiate their salaries and advocate for themselves in tough situations at the workplace. In September, the final panel focused on project management with panelists Paula Ikpatt (HNTB), Liza Amar (CDM Smith), Jessica Cohen (Harris County Precinct 4) and Lillian Mayo (METRO).

Other events included a happy hour and small group meetings with multiple mentoring pairs. The program wrapped up with an end-of-year celebration in November. At the event, Tamika Dickerson (HNTB) gave an excellent talk going over the importance of finding mentorship and how it can shape your career. Mentees and Mentors each highlighted their favorite take away from the mentorship program and lots plan to continue their mentorship beyond the program. Thank you to all the mentees and mentors for your commitment to the program this year!

STEM Outreach

By Farah Anwar, Jacobs, STEM Chair

WTS Houston volunteered at **MATHCOUNTS** with the **Texas Society of Professional Engineers (TSPE)** Greater Houston Chapter February 10th, 2024, at the George H.W. Bush Community Center in Spring. STEM Committee Chair, **Farah Anwar**, was joined by chapter members Cissa Oliveira and Rob Powers. **MATHCOUNTS** is a middle school level math competition held in various cities across the nation with a series of progressive competitions at local, state, and national levels. With over 200 schools and over 100 mathletes participating in chapter competitions across the state, the Texas **MATHCOUNTS** program is one of the biggest and best in the nation where TSPE has been the sponsoring organization for the event since its inception. We volunteered with them for the Greater Houston Chapter's competition where we helped to grade tests, proctor students in the testing room, and prepare goodie bags for all competitors. This annual program ensures that students have an opportunity to expand their minds and hone their critical thinking skills. It encourages and motivates students to do well in math and recognizes and rewards them for achievement. A big thank you to all volunteers and to TSPE for their commitment to STEM and the next generation. The world needs bright minds and we are proud to keep supporting these initiatives within our community by continuing to work with organizations like TSPE in the



GirlStart

By Farah Anwar, Jacobs, STEM Chair

WTS Houston volunteered this fall with GirlStart at the annual **Energy Day Festival!** The free family fest was held in downtown Houston at Sam Houston Park on Saturday, October 19th. STEM Committee Chair, **Farah Anwar**, was joined by chapter members *Michel Maksoud* and *Jannatul Tanjil* who volunteered to help. The Energy Day Festival is held every year and is like a giant outdoor science fair in the park – the event is focused on introducing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to kids and showing how fun it can be! It is full of exciting experiments, hands-on activities, and awesome exhibits where kids can explore, create and learn about the energy that powers the world around us all while listening to live music and enjoying the weather! Many different companies and organizations participate in this event which is free and open to the public. GirlStart had their own booth at the festival where we assisted in putting together an engaging, hands-on activity for children of all ages to enjoy. We set up a kite-making activity station for which we had colored paper for the body of the kite, straws for the spine, streamers and string for the tail and fun tapes to put it all together. We did demos with the kids and were there to help them build their kites together. We also had swag like stickers and bags to pass out to the kids.



ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP & AWARDS GALA

2024 WTS Houston Scholarship Winners

HELENE M. OVERLY MEMORIAL

Musfira Rahman
Texas A&M University

LEADERSHIP LEGACY

Sania Pirouzi
Texas Southern University

SHARON D BANKS MEMORIAL

Claire Dean
Rice University

MOLITORIS LEADERSHIP

Alexis Howard
University of Houston

TRANSPORTATION YOU

Madison Ferrow
Katy High School

DEC ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE

Alejandra Jimenez
Rice University

By Dani Courtney, HNTB, Director of Student Relations

Our Chapter attracts new professionals to the industry by providing scholarships to women in the Houston region pursuing a transportation-related or STEM program. This year, the chapter awarded a total of six (6) scholarships for a total of \$19,800.00. The TransportationYou scholarship was awarded to **Madison Ferrow**, a Senior at Katy High School, for her interest in a career in engineering an supporting women in STEM. Our Undergraduate and Graduate student award winners are committed to transportation and careers in the industry. The Sharon D. Banks Memorial Undergraduate Scholarship was awarded to **Claire Dean**, a junior at Rice University. Claire is working on her degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering and completed internships with TEI and City of Houston Public Works. She is planning on pursuing a career in transportation engineering, with a focus on equitable, accessible, and safe transportation systems. The Molitoris Leadership Scholarship was awarded to **Alexis Howard**, a senior at the University of Houston-Downtown. Alexis is studying Supply Chain Management and will graduate in Fall 2024. Our last undergraduate scholarship, the DEC Engineering Excellence Endowed Scholarship, was awarded to **Alejandra Jimenez**, a Civil Engineering major at Rice University. Alejandra is interested in the role that transportation can hold in fostering thriving communities. Two graduate students were awarded scholarships recognizing their leadership and commitment to the transportation industry. The Helene M. Overly Memorial Scholarship was awarded to **Musfira Rahman**, a Ph.D. candidate at Texas A&M University. Her experience growing up in Dhaka, Bangladesh, one of the world's most congested cities, led her to focus on behavioral economics to model lane choice-based demand modeling. Her ultimate goal is to use this data on driver behavior to inform future innovative and sustainable transportation solutions in transportation economics. The Jannet Walker-Ford Leadership Legacy Scholarship was awarded to **Sania Pirouzi** of Texas Southern University. Sania is working on her master's degree in Transportation Management and Planning, and she focuses on studying bicycle driver behavior.



Advancing women
Advancing transportation
> Houston

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP & AWARDS GALA

By Ashley Jones, AS&E L.L.C., Vice President

The 2024 WTS Houston Scholarship & Awards Gala was held on March 1, 2024, at the Royal Sonesta. The Gala celebrated our recognition award and scholarship winners, as well as our Chapter's 20th Anniversary. This year's theme, Boots & Bubbly, recognizes the Chapter's Texas roots and nodded to the start of the Houston Rodeo. The annual Gala is held to celebrate colleagues and scholars who exemplify the core mission of WTS, and to raise funds for our Foundation programs. This year's fundraisers were successful in raising the funds needed for the 2024 scholarship program, as well as an Engineering Excellence Scholarship sponsored by **Michel Maksoud, PhD, PE**.

Chapter Awards are presented to recognize the companies and individuals who have made positive contributions to either to the Chapter or to the transportation industry in the Houston region. The employer of the year, **Jacobs** has facilitated the implementation of programs that focus on the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women within the company. This includes the CEO pledging to advance more women into leadership positions and monitoring the progress of this initiative quarterly; creating programs focused on internal talent and leadership to promote retention; and providing support to women who are returning to work **Kimberly J. Williams** was recognized as Woman of the Year, both for her trailblazing contributions to women's current and future careers as transportation professionals and as a leader in innovating public transit solutions to better serve Houston's communities. She was integral in the development and implementation of METRO'S FutureLink, which addresses first and last mile transit needs of Houston communities. As she worked with her team to develop this project, she engaged with students in the area and gave them the opportunity to learn about this new technology and ways to plan for Houston's future transportation needs. The Honorable Ray LaHood Award, which recognizes men who advocate for the advancement of women within their own organizations and the transportation industry, was awarded to **T. Wayne Holcombe**. The Innovation Transportation Solutions Award was presented to **METRO** for the FutureLink Project, a mid-size Level 4 autonomous shuttle. This vehicle will serve as a community connector, transporting people from their neighborhoods to METRO'S high-capacity transit network of buses, light rail, and park-and-ride locations. Two WTS-Houston members were recognized for their contributions to the industry and to the chapter: **Yanfen Zhou, PE, PTOE** of Pape Dawson (2024 Young Engineer of the Year), and **Courtney Blechle** of HNTB (Member of the Year).

2024 WTS Houston Award Winners

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Kimberly J. Williams
METRO

YOUNG ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

Yanfen Zhou, PE, PTOE
Pape Dawson

HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD (MAN OF THE YEAR)

T. Wayne Holcombe
Gradiant

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

Jacobs

MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Courtney Blechle
HNTB

INNOVATIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTION AWARD

FutureLink Project
METRO



2024 WTS International Conference

The Crescent City: Connecting Culture, Connecting Communities

The 2024 WTS International (WTSI) Annual Conference, "The Crescent City: Connecting Cultures, Connecting Communities," was held May 8th through 10th in New Orleans. Our chapter was well-represented with twenty members, including several board members, among the 1200+ attendees from the US and Canada. During the three-day conference, attendees had the opportunity to network with new professionals, reconnect with friends, and learn about WTSI's latest initiatives and current trends in the transportation industry.

On the first day, many of our Houston Chapter members participated in various technical tours organized by the local chapter, providing insights into New Orleans' diverse modes of transportation, including the historic streetcar, walking/biking routes, railroads, airports, and boats. The conference featured an array of inspiring speakers across multiple breakout sessions, plenary sessions, and mainstage panel discussions. The keynote address was delivered by Donna Orender, the founder of Generation W. As the former president of the WNBA, PGA TOUR Senior Executive, and current CEO of Orender Unlimited, she spoke passionately about self-advocacy and the importance of "doing the work."

The WTS Foundation Awards and Scholarship Gala was a memorable evening held at New Orleans' Mardi Gras World, where our chapter was honored to receive the **Gold Level Circle of Excellence!** We are already looking forward to the first international WTSI Conference in Toronto, Canada, next year.



2024 WTS Houston Committee Chairs

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Lacey Hébert, AtkinsRéalis

MEMBERSHIP

Yahaira Pineda, STV

SCHOLARSHIP & AWARDS GALA

Delynn Henry, JACOBS

FINANCE

Sarah Jane Kleber, Kimley-Horn

Allison Schaub, Pape-Dawson

COMMUNICATIONS

Lauren Mills, Quiddity

Karleigh Brown, Baxter & Woodman

Maddy Monsalve, STV

Youssaira Belmokadem, Gannett Fleming

TranSystems

Sarah DeMoya, HDR

PROGRAMS

Da Li, WSP USA

Valencia Stewart, HNTB

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Valencia Stewart, HNTB

Sadia Sharmin, CDM Smith

TECHNICAL TOURS

Thalia Gonzalez, JACOBS

TRANSPORTATION YOU/STEM

Farah Anwar, JACOBS

SCHOLARSHIPS

Youssaira Belmokadem, Gannett Fleming
TranSystems

Sana Hassan, JACOBS

STUDENT CHAPTERS

Victoria Mota, TEI

Cissa Corliss, WSB

DIVERSITY

Bin Wang, WSP USA

MENTORSHIP

Tania Acosta, Raba Kistner

Sara Coffey, Pape-Dawson

2024 PROGRAMS

January	Luncheon	Eliza Paul, P.E. TxDOT-HOU
February	Luncheon	Sherry Weesner, P.E., TIRZ 5, Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority
March	Gala	Scholarship & Awards Gala
April	Luncheon	Capt. Lindsay Price, G&H Towing Company, Space X
April	Lattes & Leaders	Jessica Baker Daily, P.E., CFM, PMP., Halff
May	Luncheon	Commissioner Lesley Briones, Harris County Pct. 4
June	Joint Event	ASCE and WTS — International Women in Engineering
July	Joint Event	TAG and WTS — Celebrating Women in Transportation
August	Luncheon	Josie Ortiz, P.E., HCTRA
September	Joint Event	APA and WTS - Urban Planning Panel
September	Members Event	Leadership Tea
October	Lattes & Leaders	Barbara Russell, P.E., TxDOT-HOU
November	Members Event	Professional Development & Diversity Half-day Event
November	Members Event	Painting with a Twist, North Houston Members
December	Members Event	Sponsor Appreciation and Women on the Move



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & DIVERSITY

Professional Development and Diversity Half-day Event

The WTS Houston Chapter hosted a Professional Development Half-Day Event on Thursday, November 7, 2024, at The Royal Sonesta. With an estimated attendance of 75 attendees, the event brought together transportation professionals from across the Texas region to engage in meaningful discussions on leadership, diversity, teamwork, technical regulations, and equity within the transportation industry.

WTS Houston Keynote Speaker **Stephanie Nellons-Paige** opened the event with a compelling message about discovering her “WHY” and how her background has influenced her 30 years of executive experience. Stephanie Nellons-Paige is recognized as an influential leader committed to promoting inclusivity and innovation in the transportation sector. She shared her journey, highlighting the significance of resilience, mentorship, and embracing what diversity looks like to drive progress. Her message resonated deeply with attendees, as it shaped and inspired a transformative tone throughout the duration of the event.

The diversity panel featured Megan Dere, MPA, Civil Rights Program Manager, FHWA Texas Division, and Ronisha Hodge, BSUP, Community Planner, Federal Transit Administration who led a powerful discussion on equity in transportation, community planning initiatives, and equal access to public programs. They addressed challenges experienced and opportunities that are in development to create more accessible, inclusive systems for all communities. Megan highlighted innovative strategies for incorporating equity into transportation planning, while Ronisha shared impactful examples of initiatives that have successfully bridged gaps in underserved areas. The panel sparked insightful questions and dialogue from attendees, emphasizing the critical role of equity in the future of transportation.

The Half-Day event concluded with an engaging professional development workshop led by Laurie Hall, MSc, PCC, L6S Blackbelt a renowned expert in leadership and career growth. Laurie provided actionable tools and strategies for navigating career challenges, improving communication, and building authentic professional relationships. Participants left with a renewed sense of confidence and practical skills to advance personal and professional development. This half-day event highlighted WTS Houston’s dedication to empowering its members through education, networking, and advocacy for a more diverse and equitable transportation industry. Overall attendees left feeling inspired and equipped to make a lasting impact in their careers and communities.



CORPORATE PARTNERS

Financial Statement January - October 2024

REVENUE	
Annual Awards Gala	\$60,550.25
Membership	\$10,809.70
Monthly Programs	\$10,614.13
Corporate Sponsorship	\$85,619.87
STEM	\$485.20
Professional Development Program	\$5,113.22
Other	\$1,894.05
Total Revenue	\$175,086.42
EXPENDITURES	
Annual Awards Gala	\$59,662.44
Operating Expenses	\$6,255.24
Membership	\$15,361.61
Mentorship Program	\$680.77
Monthly Programs	\$15,454.78
WTSI Conferences	\$23,895.33
Corporate Sponsorship	\$12,418.54
STEM Committee	\$201.85
WTS Foundation Allocation	\$16,965.00
Chapter Leaders Conference	\$321.96
Professional Development Program	\$3,642.10
Other	\$3,805.86
Total Expenditures	\$158,665.48
NET REVENUE	\$16,420.94

TITANIUM

AECOM Imagine it. Delivered. | Jacobs | THE RICK GROUP
HDR | HNTB

PLATINUM

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GANNETT FLEMING | Riner Engineering | PAPE-DAWSON ENGINEERS | WSP

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Our corporate and agency sponsors help WTS Houston underwrite programs, STEM events, scholarships and professional development opportunities. **Their generous financial support allows WTS Houston to continue to promote our mission and expand our reach in the local transportation industry.**

We are thankful to our Corporate Partners Chair, **Lacey Atkins-Hébert**, who is leading the committee to grow and increase our annual sponsorships.

The 2024 WTS Houston Board of Directors wish to thank all of the corporate and agency partners who gave so generously to help our chapter further its mission.