



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ILLINOIS TOLLWAY AND ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION LEADERS
NAMED "WOMEN OF THE YEAR" BY WOMEN'S TRANSPORTATION SEMINAR CHICAGO**

Award Recognizes Women Who Are Outstanding Role Models in Transportation

CHICAGO, IL – The Illinois Tollway and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced that Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur and Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann Schneider have been selected as "Women of the Year" by the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Greater Chicago Chapter.

The award recognizes Lafleur and Schneider for their leadership and outstanding contributions to the Chicago-area transportation industry. It also takes into account their contributions to the advancement of women and minorities through programs or opportunities in transportation.

"The WTS Greater Chicago Chapter is proud to honor Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur and Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann Schneider as our 2012 Women of the Year," said WTS Greater Chicago Chapter President Melissa Thomson. "Both truly exemplify WTS's mission of transforming transportation through the advancement of women, especially women in the state of Illinois."

Lafleur and Schneider will be presented with their awards this spring and, as recipients of the WTS Greater Chicago Women of the Year award, they are automatically nominated for the WTS International award.

"I am proud to have appointed two women to the helm of our transportation agencies," said Governor Pat Quinn. "I congratulate Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur and Transportation Secretary Ann Schneider for their outstanding work at improving transportation and supporting programs that promote economic development in our state. Their efforts and this recognition will help encourage more women to enter the transportation industry, and drive the industry to continue creating equal opportunities for women and minorities."

Illinois plays a vital role in efficiently moving people and the goods and services on which the local, regional and national economies depend. Due to its central location, Illinois has one of the most extensive networks of roads, rail, airports and waterways.

"It's an honor to share the Women of the Year title with my friend and colleague Ann Schneider," said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur. "This award validates all the hard work of the women and men of both the Tollway and IDOT, as we all work together for the benefit of motorists and local communities throughout Illinois."

Illinois' network of 138,000 miles of state and local roads makes it the nation's third-largest state highway system. The state highway system of 17,000 miles of roads includes the 286-mile Illinois Tollway system in Northern Illinois in its total of 2,050 miles of interstate roads.

“We work together to provide a greener, more efficient transportation network in Illinois -- the transportation hub of the nation. Being recognized by WTS along with my counterpart Kristi Lafleur makes this award even more special,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann Schneider. “We are fortunate to both have the support of Governor Pat Quinn, and work with great teams of professionals who share our vision to make Illinois the recognized leader in transportation.”

The Illinois Tollway and IDOT collaborate on a wide range of transportation issues to help relieve congestion, improve mobility and provide time and cost savings for motorists. The agencies also work together closely on initiatives that enhance quality of life, promote economic development and demonstrate respect for our environment.

About Kristi Lafleur



Kristi Lafleur was appointed executive director of the Illinois Tollway in April 2010 by the Tollway Board of Directors following a nationwide search. She is the first woman to serve in this role since the agency was created in 1953. Lafleur launched her new administration by spearheading efforts to secure a \$12 billion, 15-year capital program, *Move Illinois: The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future*, to accommodate needs of the region’s traveling public into the 21st century. The program establishes guidelines for infrastructure investments for 2012-2026, including priority projects to improve regional mobility and integration of transit opportunities for the first time in agency history.

Lafleur co-chaired Governor Quinn’s Elgin O’Hare West Bypass Advisory Council, a project of national significance, to develop the vision for the Elgin O’Hare West Bypass as a “Corridor of the Future.” In September 2011, Lafleur was named to the board of directors of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association, the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the businesses that serve tolling. She also serves on the executive board of the E-ZPass Group, an association of 24 toll agencies in 14 states that works to advance interoperability of toll collection systems throughout North America.

Prior to the Tollway, Lafleur served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Development and Recovery for Governor Quinn, organizing American Recovery and Reinvestment Act programs investing more than \$12 billion in federal funds in Illinois. Lafleur also served as the governor’s liaison and chair of the Midwest High Speed Rail Steering Committee, a group appointed by eight Midwest governors and the mayor of Chicago.

About Ann Schneider



In November 2011, Ann Schneider became the first female secretary of transportation with unanimous confirmation by the Illinois Senate. As secretary, Schneider is responsible for coordination with federal, state and local elected officials, agency directors, industry associations and adjacent state DOTs and she serves as Chief Executive Officer for IDOT.

Prior to her appointment as secretary, Schneider was the Chief Operations Officer and Chief Fiscal Officer for IDOT. In this position, she was responsible for the most aggressive minority recruitment effort ever undertaken by IDOT. She identified universities with large minority civil engineering student enrollments. She also developed IDOT recruitment teams and sent them to hire engineers from targeted universities.

Under Schneider's aggressive leadership, IDOT has made significant improvement towards obtaining parity in all underutilized categories. In an effort to interest minority students to study engineering, she developed the first-ever IDOT Transportation Career Day for middle and high school students. In addition, she created the IDOT university engineering scholarship program for minority students that are willing to commit to a career at IDOT.

WTS Greater Chicago Chapter

WTS is an international organization dedicated to the professional advancement of women in transportation. WTS is committed to advancing women in transportation through expanding existing scholarship opportunities to women pursuing transportation related degrees, providing and promoting more educational opportunities and career development to advance women in transportation and initiating, sponsoring and publishing research related to advancing women in transportation. Its membership includes more than 4,000 women and men in 47 chapters representing cities and states in the U.S., Canada and Great Britain, including chapters in both Chicago and Central Illinois.

Illinois Department of Transportation

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has responsibility for planning, construction and maintenance of Illinois' extensive transportation network, which encompasses, highways and bridges, airports, public transit, rail freight and rail passenger systems. It operates with an annual budget of approximately \$5 billion.

About the Illinois Tollway

The Illinois Tollway is a user-fee system that receives no state or federal funds for maintenance and operations. The agency maintains and operates 286 miles of interstate tollways in 12 counties in Northern Illinois, including the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88), the Veterans Memorial Tollway (I-355), the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80).

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