



NEWS

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**ILLINOIS TOLLWAY TO RECEIVE GOVERNMENT AGENCY OF THE YEAR AWARD
FROM THE ILLINOIS BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Tollway to be recognized for commitment to providing contract opportunities for African American firms

DOWNERS GROVE, IL – The Illinois Tollway will be presented the Government Agency of the Year Award by the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce (ILBCC) in recognition of the agency's efforts to increase opportunities for African American firms to participate on Tollway projects.

The Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce awards its Government Agency of the Year Award to the agency that has demonstrated commitment to diversity and improving African American procurement participation throughout the state. The award will be presented at a ceremony this evening by John Harmon, chairman of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, and Larry Ivory, president and chief executive officer of the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, at the chamber's annual convention in East Peoria, Illinois, August 23-24.

"The Illinois Tollway is committed to helping diverse and veteran-owned firms grow and succeed," said Illinois Tollway Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom, who will be accepting the award on behalf of the agency. "We are focused on moving the needle forward by advancing a robust diversity program that further reduces barriers to participation for small and diverse firms, as well as underemployed individuals."

"It's a great honor for the Illinois Tollway to be chosen Government Agency of the Year," said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Greg Bedalov. "Even though we have made great strides to improve minority participation, we realize there is much more work to be done. Working in partnership with the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, we will continue to strive for improvement and ensure that Tollway projects reflect the diversity of the communities we serve throughout Northern Illinois."

As of June 30, 2016, an estimated 980 unique firms have worked on Tollway construction projects since the 15-year, \$12 billion *Move Illinois* capital program began – including 365 firms identified as disadvantaged, minority- or women-owned firms. Of those 980 unique firms, an estimated 532 firms are new to the Tollway. And, of those 532 firms, 163 firms are minority or women-owned firms.

The Illinois Tollway has a track record of increasing opportunities for small, diverse and veteran-owned firms. Between January 1, 2011, and June 30, 2016, the Tollway paid \$3.8 billion on construction and professional services contracts, with disadvantaged, minority- and women-owned business enterprise (D/M/WBE) firms being paid \$855.2 million of that amount, or 22.5 percent.

In July, the Illinois Tollway's Board of Directors reaffirmed the agency's commitment to diversity by adopting recommendations from the Tollway's Diversity Report that will reduce barriers for disadvantaged, minority- and women-owned firms, as well as small and veteran-owned businesses, competing for Tollway contracts. The report contains 27 recommendations describing steps the Tollway is taking, plans to take in the future or will study further to increase participation by diverse businesses in all aspects of its operations.

“The Illinois Tollway and its leadership have demonstrated a serious commitment to improving diversity,” Ivory said. “Their openness and transparency have given us greater confidence, which is why we selected the Tollway for this award. We hope other agencies will follow this model.”

ILBCC officials commended the Illinois Tollway not only for increasing contract opportunities for African American firms, but also for its willingness to build and expand upon past accomplishments to level the playing field for diverse firms going forward. The chamber cited the Tollway’s creation last year of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee led by Tollway Board Director Corey Brooks and the Diversity Advisory Committee comprised of members from various advocacy and business organizations, including the ILBCC.

About ILBCC

The Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce (ILBCC) is the largest, most active voice for African American businesses in the State of Illinois. Our objective is to help promote job creation and growth among African American businesses. Subsequently, we have emerged to become the leading advocate and go-to source for many state and local entities as well as corporations to promote these very principles. Through our strong membership base and network of local chapters, we proactively work to promote a healthier business climate and economic empowerment through entrepreneurship.

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 292 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), the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80) and the Illinois Route 390 Tollway.

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