



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
BRUCE RAUNER

For Immediate Release
Friday, February 10, 2017

Contact

Governor's Office: Allie Bovis
Allie.Bovis@illinois.gov

Illinois Tollway: Cindy Klima
cklima@getipass.com

Governor Announces New Efforts to Expand Diversity Programs at Tollway

Illinois Tollway is offering new initiatives to increase participation by diverse businesses and workers

CHICAGO - Governor Bruce Rauner joined Tollway Chairman Bob Schillerstrom, Board Directors Corey Brooks and Joe Gomez, and Executive Director Greg Bedalov today to highlight the Tollway's efforts in strengthening diversity programs to build new opportunities and assistance for minorities, women and veterans. These efforts are breaking down barriers for businesses owned by minorities, women and veterans to compete for state contracts and for workers to qualify for good-paying construction and engineering jobs.

"Our commitment to having a diverse workforce is leading to stable, good-paying contracts and job opportunities for minorities, women and veterans," said Governor Bruce Rauner. "This is just the beginning. When these businesses succeed, we all succeed. I thank the Tollway for its commitment and dedication to ensuring all Illinoisans have access these economic opportunities."

The Tollway's commitment to strengthening its diversity efforts puts the State of Illinois at the leading edge of diversity initiatives nationwide and serves as a blueprint for continuing to expand these programs in the future. In 2017, the Tollway is boosting its annual investment by more than 60 percent to fund programs that will increase participation by diverse businesses and workers in the Tollway's 15 year \$12 billion Move Illinois capital program.

“It’s our goal to throw open the doors at the Illinois Tollway and the firms we do business with to support more diverse workforces and to create access to as many sustainable jobs as possible,” said Tollway Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom. “With a job you can support yourself, support your family, contribute to your community and the economy, so one of the things that I believe government can do is create an environment where jobs can be created and where people have access to jobs.”

“We know we can lower the barriers that prevent some minority-owned businesses from competing for our contracts and keep diverse workers from finding the jobs they need,” said Tollway Director Corey Brooks. “We already have done vital work to be more inclusive but know there is still much more we can achieve.”

The Tollway operates a robust Diversity Program that has achieved national recognition, particularly for its pioneering Partnering for Growth mentoring program that assists engineering and professional services firms. The agency is taking additional steps this year to increase the scope and effectiveness of its efforts, by expanding the program to begin assisting construction firms to improve their business practices and grow their businesses.

The Tollway is also expanding its Technical Assistance Program to help disadvantaged, minority- and women-owned firms learn how to serve as prime contractors on roadway and other heavy construction work being done by the Tollway and other state agencies. Nearly 300 companies already have participated in Tollway-supported Technical Assistance Programs and participating firms have submitted more than 170 bids as primes or subcontractors, winning 36 bids. These firms already are playing a greater role in Tollway projects, with small, minority- and women-owned businesses earning more than \$517 million from Tollway construction and professional services contracts since January 2015—a 41 percent increase from the prior two-year period.

The Tollway this year will launch new construction workforce training program that will offer centers in disadvantaged communities to reduce obstacle and help workers gain the training, skills and access to jobs in the heavy highway construction trades. The new workforce development centers will provide workers with education programs to build their skills, with internships and apprenticeships to offer them training and then access to construction companies that need to hire new workers for future projects including the reconstruction of the Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) scheduled to begin in 2020 as part of the Move Illinois Program.

The Tollway already is helping recruit and train diverse workers through its Earned Credit Program, which supports pre-apprenticeship construction training programs and then provides resumes to construction firms, which receive credits for future bids on Tollway projects when they hire graduates of the program.

More than 250 workers who graduated from the Earned Credit Program have gain employment, collectively earning more than \$13 million in wages.

“We want to build on our successes and create better, broader opportunities for disadvantaged and diverse businesses and workers,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Greg Bedalov. “We are determined to create a pool of contractors and workers that is as diverse as the communities we serve in Northern Illinois.”

###