



Move Illinois:
The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future

NEWS

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ILLINOIS TOLLWAY CHIEF ENGINEERING OFFICER NAMED WTS GREATER CHICAGO CHAPTER 2018 HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD MAN OF THE YEAR

DOWNERS GROVE, IL – The Illinois Tollway’s Chief Engineering Officer Paul Kovacs is the 2018 recipient of the Honorable Ray LaHood Man of the Year Award named by the WTS Greater Chicago Chapter.

“Paul Kovacs, a longtime supporter of WTS, is a true advocate for seeking opportunities to advance the reputation and credibility of women throughout the Greater Chicago region,” said WTS International Chair Maggie Walsh. “He is known for his leadership in implementing the Tollway’s *Move Illinois* capital program, which has made a tremendous and positive impact on the regional transportation network.”

The WTS Man of the Year Award recognizes a transportation leader who has made an outstanding contribution to the transportation industry and directly contributed to the advancement of women and minorities through programs or opportunities. The award also recognizes a man who leads by example, seeking out opportunities to advance and advocate for women in his own organization, and ensures that women are able to compete for key positions of authority within that organization.

“This is a well-deserved recognition for Paul Kovacs, a leader who has encouraged and inspired women both here at the Tollway and throughout the transportation industry,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Liz Gorman. “His visionary leadership, engineering acumen and dedication to the safety and service of the more than 1.6 million daily drivers on the Tollway system are instrumental to the success of the agency and its reputation as a world-class organization.”

Through this award, WTS recognized Kovacs as a leader who supports and inspires women in transportation to succeed through his integrity, humility and genuine concern for people and the Engineering profession, as well as work to advance women throughout the profession and set the foundation for a future generation of women leaders at the Illinois Tollway. Kovacs is also recognized for his ability to work in collaboration with others and efforts to promote diversity and inclusion on Tollway projects.

Kovacs joined the Tollway in 1999 as a senior project engineer managing various Tollway bridge, roadway and interchange projects. He was promoted to open road tolling program manager and deputy chief of project implementation to manage the conversion of 20 mainline toll plazas to open road tolling – making Illinois the first state to complete, in less than two years, a total mainline conversion from a traditional barrier system to an end-to-end open road tolling system – as well as roadway and widening and reconstruction improvements along the north and south segments of the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80), the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88).

Today, Kovacs is the longest-serving chief engineering officer in the Tollway’s history, serving in this role since 2007. He is responsible for the policies, practices and procedures of the Engineering Department, which oversees all design and construction operations on the agency’s 294-mile system of roadways serving more than 1.6 million daily users in Northern Illinois. He leads a staff of more than

600 professionals, with women represented throughout all aspects of the Tollway's Engineering Department.

Currently, Kovacs is responsible for delivering the seventh year of the Tollway's 15-year, \$14 billion capital program, *Move Illinois: The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future*. He has overseen completion of the Illinois Route 390 Tollway, rebuilding and widening of 62 miles of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and completion of the first phase of the Tri-State Tollway (I-294)/I-57 Interchange. He is now leading efforts to reconstruct the Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) from 95th Street to Balmoral Avenue and build the new I-490 Tollway to provide western access to O'Hare International Airport.

Kovacs has been instrumental to creating greater opportunities for small, diverse, women and veteran-owned firms to participate on Tollway projects. Working with the Tollway's Department of Diversity and Strategic Development, Kovacs has led efforts to break down larger contracts into smaller jobs and create greater opportunities through the Small Business Set-Aside Program. Since *Move Illinois* began in 2012, the Tollway has awarded more than 130 construction contracts less than \$5 million and, in addition, nearly 80 small business set-aside contracts for construction generally with values of approximately \$1 million.

These opportunities have resulted in more new firms and more diversity on Tollway projects than ever before. More than half of the nearly 1,265 unique firms that have participated on *Move Illinois* are new to the Tollway and nearly one-third of those 1,265 unique firms are disadvantaged, minority-, women- or veteran-owned firms.

About *Move Illinois*

The Illinois Tollway's 15-year, \$14 billion capital program, *Move Illinois: The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future*, is improving mobility, relieving congestion, reducing pollution, creating as many as 120,000 jobs and linking economies throughout the region. The first six years of *Move Illinois* are on schedule and within budget, delivering the new Illinois Route 390 Tollway and a rebuilt and widened Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) with its new SmartRoad corridor, as well as opening a new interchange connecting the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) to I-57. Progress continues on projects addressing the remaining needs of the existing Tollway system, delivering the new I-490 Tollway Project and reconstruction of the Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) and planning for emerging projects.

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 294 miles of roadways 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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