



*Move Illinois:
The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future*

NEWS

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**ILLINOIS TOLLWAY RECOGNIZED FOR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
BY WOMEN'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

WBDC honors Tollway for expanding and improving programs to increase participation for diverse firms

DOWNERS GROVE, IL – The Illinois Tollway will receive the Government Champion Award from the Women's Business Development Center tonight, September 14, in recognition of the agency's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

"The Illinois Tollway is a great partner for the WBDC. It is commendably dedicated to ensuring fairness and equity in its distribution of business opportunities, which aligns with our mission, helps our clients and fuels economic growth," said Women's Business Development Center President and Chief Executive Officer Emilia DiMenco. "We are thrilled to recognize the Illinois Tollway as this year's Government Champion."

The Government Champion Award presented as part of the WBDC's annual Connect & Celebrate Chicago Conference recognizes a public-sector partner committed to supplier diversity and inclusion and support for the WBDC's mission to assist and accelerate women's business ownership and strengthen their impact on the economy. The WBDC recognizes the Tollway for the progress and impact it has made over the last two years with its expanded programs, enhanced policies and increased efforts to accelerate the participation in Tollway projects of women, minorities and other diverse business owners.

"We are proud to be recognized by the WBDC for the great progress we are making to level the playing field for all firms," said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Liz Gorman. "The Illinois Tollway is committed to creating opportunities for women and men leading all types and size of businesses to work with the Illinois Tollway as we deliver infrastructure improvements throughout Northern Illinois."

The Illinois Tollway's diversity and inclusion efforts are based upon an overall strategy of increased access, greater participation and creating opportunities for advancement to support the 15-year, \$14 billion *Move Illinois* Program. In the past two years, the Tollway has introduced, refined and expanded several programs and resources to help promote participation for small, diverse and veteran firms, as well as underrepresented individuals.

The Tollway recently expanded its Partnering for Growth Program (P4G) to include mentorship opportunities for both construction and professional engineering services firms. P4G encourages larger, more experience firms to mentor and assist small, diverse and veteran-owned businesses to become self-sufficient, competitive and profitable businesses. P4G helps small and diverse firms gain valuable Tollway project experience and build relationships with larger firms that can last for years.

The Tollway also expanded its Technical Assistance Program to provide firms the tools and training needed to take their businesses to the next level and participate as primes and subcontractors on heavy highway and vertical construction projects. In 2017, the Tollway expanded from two providers in five locations in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs in 2013 to seven providers in 12 locations across the entire Tollway system, including Aurora, Chicago, Chicago Heights, Rockford and Waukegan.

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Technical assistance is designed to help new or emerging businesses strengthen existing operations and help established businesses gain expertise in new areas so they can expand operations.

In addition, the Tollway creates new prime and subcontracting opportunities by unbundling larger contracts and setting aside construction contracts to be awarded only to Illinois registered small businesses, including 78 small business set-aside contracts since 2012. The agency also evaluates all agency solicitations for inclusion of veteran-owned, small and diverse businesses.

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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