



NEWS

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**ILLINOIS TOLLWAY CONSTRUCTIONWORKS PROGRAM LAUNCHING
WITH SERVICES ACROSS NORTHERN ILLINOIS**

*Access to training, apprenticeships and careers within skilled construction trades
offered through the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership*

DOWNERS GROVE, IL – Joined by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, state transportation leaders Sen. Martin Sandoval and Rep. Marcus Evans, Illinois Tollway Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom and Executive Director Liz Gorman announced today that its new ConstructionWorks workforce training and careers program is ready to begin serving job seekers at 18 sites in Cook County, DuPage County, Chicago, Rockford, Aurora and Waukegan.

"We are marking the official start of ConstructionWorks to create a pipeline of qualified diverse men and women ready for careers in the heavy highway and related construction industries," said Illinois Tollway Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom. "ConstructionWorks will provide more than just job opportunities – it will allow workers to support their families, send their kids to college and build a better future for themselves."

Administered by The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, ConstructionWorks will provide free pre-apprenticeship training and support services to underemployed and disenfranchised individuals seeking training and career opportunities in the highway construction industry, including members of minority groups, women and veterans.

"Workforce development has always been one of my administration's top priorities," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "I applaud the Illinois Tollway for having the foresight to engage the public workforce system to champion this effort in an industry that has been historically biased against minorities, especially women and people of color."

ConstructionWorks is expected to train and place at least 150 individuals in apprenticeship and training programs or advance participation within the skilled trades during an initial three-year term, with an emphasis on heavy highway skilled construction trades.

New workers, including laborers, equipment operators, carpenters, electricians, iron workers, cement masons and others within the critical heavy-highway construction industry are needed to work on construction projects as part of the Tollway's 15-year, \$14 billion *Move Illinois* capital program, as well as other capital projects advanced by Cook County, the Illinois Department of Transportation and transit agencies.

"As legislators, we always strive to expand access to opportunities for diverse communities. I applaud the leadership from the Tollway for their commitment to do just that," said Illinois Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Martin Sandoval. "ConstructionWorks is a great example of what's possible when the public and private sectors work together to accomplish great things for the people of Illinois."

“This free program is making it possible for diverse men and women to create a better future for their families,” added Illinois House Transportation Committee Chairman Marcus Evans. “By breaking down barriers to high-demand, high-growth job opportunities, the Illinois Tollway is making a path to success a reality. I urge all those seeking a rewarding career to get started with the ConstructionWorks program today.”

Under the Tollway’s \$4.2 million contract, The Partnership is managing a consortium of 18 service providers and affiliated agencies to provide a range of services on behalf of the Tollway including recruiting eligible participants, conducting pre-apprenticeship training and providing ongoing assistance with career coaches and support services. Eligibility is determined by federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act standards.

“I believe very strongly that every single person deserves access to world-class careers, skills training and job opportunities,” said Karin M. Norington-Reaves, CEO of The Partnership. “Today’s announcement aligns with our efforts to ensure we are providing resources for people traditionally underrepresented in the construction trade and furthers our mission to create economic empowerment through employment.”

The Partnership will help identify and directly place underemployed construction industry workers and trainees in meaningful construction industry opportunities, such as U.S. Department of Labor-approved apprenticeships and training programs. In addition, ConstructionWorks will also assist qualified individuals seeking to move into more highly-skilled trades through referrals to basic skills and adult education resources.

Free services for job seekers will career coach assistance to assess abilities and interests, develop career and skills training plans and provide ongoing retention support. Access to support services for trainees will include assistance with transportation, child care, counseling services, as well as basic skills and adult education referrals.

About The Partnership

Created in 2012, The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership combines city and county resources to broaden the reach and impact of workforce services for employers and job seekers. As the largest non-profit managed Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA) in the United States, The Partnership encompasses the city of Chicago and more than 132 other municipalities. Together, The Partnership provides the training, business services, career coaching and data analysis necessary to connect construction job seekers with career and employment opportunities on projects throughout the region, and especially the Tollway.

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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