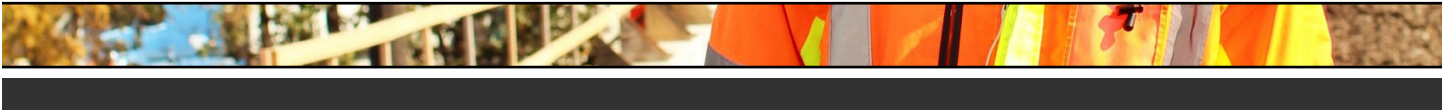




2020 DIVERSITY HIGHLIGHTS



FIRST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRADUATION IN 2020

January 2020

The Illinois Tollway believes the contractors who help build, maintain and operate its 294-mile system of roads should be as diverse as the communities it serves across Northern Illinois—and the Tollway offers training programs to help make that goal a reality.

The Tollway congratulates the leaders of six businesses who recently graduated from its Technical Assistance Program, one of the key initiatives created by the agency to help minority- and women-owned firms gain the opportunity participate in its projects, including the 15-year, \$14 billion *Move Illinois* capital program.



The Technical Assistance Program prepares transportation-related construction firms, including diverse and disadvantaged firms, as well as veteran-owned and small businesses, to work as prime contractors and subcontractors on highway and vertical construction contracts.

“Participating in our Technical Assistance Program provides business owners with comprehensive, customized training that helps them compete for contracts being awarded by the Tollway and other transportation agencies,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director José Alvarez. “We’re proud of what these graduates accomplished by completing this program and pleased to have expanded the pool of small and diverse businesses that now can contribute their skills and training to assist us with the work we’re doing to improve and expand our system.”

The six graduating firms honored in January are from various industries, including structural steel, information technology, electrical contracting, carpentry and drywall painting, asphalt, painting and flooring.

- ◆ Jameel Lunsford Jr., All J Steel Inc. – Darien
- ◆ Jose Abrego, Advanced Contractor Solutions Inc. – Chicago
- ◆ Joanne E. Szymel, Guepard Group Corp. – Barrington
- ◆ Daniel Rojas, Metromex Contractors Inc. – McCook
- ◆ Erika Venegas, Pro Nova Contracting LLC – North Aurora
- ◆ Kenneth Early, RIMCA Inc. – Melrose Park

This portion of the Technical Assistance Program was administered by the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA) Scholarship & Education Foundation, which is one of seven organizations that the Tollway partners with to operate its Technical Assistance Program.

The program is designed to assist businesses gain the experience and expertise to handle more complex projects while increasing the pool of contractors available to perform work on Tollway projects and other transportation-related construction. There are a total of 12 locations providing technical assistance for emerging businesses in Chicago, Cook County, the south suburbs and Rockford.

continued on page 2

The Technical Assistance Program means more diverse firms are working for the Tollway. As a result of the Tollway's investment, approximately 1,766 bids have been submitted by clients since 2017, including 377 on Tollway projects. These bids submitted on Tollway projects have resulted in 26 firms participating in winning bids in 2017 and 59 contracts in 2018. In 2019, 167 of the bids submitted on Tollway projects resulted in 34 firms winning work as primes or subcontractors on 25 contracts.

More information on the Technical Assistance Program can be obtained [here](#).

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY EVENT DRAWS MORE THAN 300 DIVERSE BUSINESSES

February 2020

The Illinois Tollway hosted a "Seize the Opportunity" information and networking event in Chicago to highlight opportunities for diverse, minority and women-owned companies to make use of the agency's business assistance and support resources and learn how to successfully do business with the Tollway as well as other state agencies.

The event, held at the South Shore Cultural Center, provided information about Tollway's procurement process, state certification and registration requirements, as well as upcoming contract opportunities for goods, services and roadway construction projects to more than 300 business – including more than 200 that have not previously explored opportunities to work with the Tollway.



"We are expanding our efforts to reach out to and create opportunities for new and diverse companies to join the pool of businesses working for the Tollway," said Executive Director José Alvarez. "We continue to break down contracts and identify more ways to support small and diverse business success and to help the Tollway complete its *Move Illinois* capital program as well as serve the 1.6 million customers using our roadways daily, and today we are helping to prepare businesses to seize these opportunities."

The Illinois Tollway is focused on promoting, assisting and ensuring diverse participation in all aspects of Tollway operations, including construction contracting, consulting and the supply of goods and services. As part of its commitment to increasing the diversity, the Tollway breaks down its contracts to amounts ranging from less than \$1 million to more than \$100 million so they are accessible to firms of varying sizes, including small and minority-owned businesses.

For example, since launching the \$14 billion, 15-year *Move Illinois* Capital Program in 2012, the Tollway has invested nearly \$7.3 billion, with nearly \$2 billion of that total committed to small, diverse and veteran-owned firms.

The "Seize the Opportunity" Event provided firms with direct access to talk with staff from various departments including procurement and compliance, engineering, information technology and operations to gain a better understanding of the opportunities with the Tollway, as well as information on:

- ◆ The *Move Illinois* capital program, including upcoming contracts and highlights of work scheduled for 2020-2026.
- ◆ Programs and resources supported by the Tollway's Department of Diversity and Strategic Department providing technical assistance, training, mentoring and business development opportunities firms.
- ◆ Illinois Department of Transportation and Capital Development Board resources and opportunities.
- ◆ Information and pre-certification, bonding, insurance needed to bid on Tollway contracts.

For more information about the Tollway's opportunities for small, diverse and veteran businesses and individuals work with the Tollway to grow and succeed through training programs, strategic partnerships and investments in infrastructure, visit the [Doing Business](#) section on the [Illinois Tollway's website](#).

MARTINEZ FROGS KEEPS GROWING THROUGH ILLINOIS TOLLWAY'S TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

October 2020

Ricardo Martinez launched his business more than 20 years ago with one dump truck that he drove himself. Since that humble beginning, his company, Martinez Frogs Inc., has expanded to include about 15 employees and now takes on jobs involving excavation, demolition and concrete work.

Today, the firm is continuing its growth by working on a demolition project for the Illinois Tollway along the planned route of the new I-490 Tollway along the western edge of O'Hare International Airport.

Martinez credits his confidence to bid on that work to his participation in the Tollway's Technical Assistance program, which is specifically designed to help small, diverse firms compete for work on agency construction projects.

"The Technical Assistance program has been instrumental in helping us gain the skills needed to compete and win opportunities with the Tollway," Martinez said. Barely a year after first taking part in the Technical Assistance program, Martinez Frogs will be doing demolition work on an old copper pipe factory that must be removed to help clear a path for the I-490 Tollway, which will provide western access to O'Hare Airport.

The Melrose Park company began planning and securing permits in August for the project, with field work beginning in the fall.

The Technical Assistance program from the Illinois Tollway helps both growing and established transportation-related construction firms – including disadvantaged, minority- and women-owned business enterprise (D/M/WBE), service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB) and veteran-owned small businesses (VOSB) – participate in Tollway construction projects.

"We're proud that our Technical Assistance program, along with other development initiatives offered by the Tollway, is helping small firms grow," said Illinois Tollway Executive Director José Alvarez. "The program also creates a larger pool of qualified contractors to bid on projects, which ultimately provides better value to Tollway customers."

Martinez's firm was recruited to the program by the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association, a trade group and program partner that works to create diversity in the construction industry.

"The Illinois Tollway's program has opened opportunities for companies like ours that might not otherwise have them," Martinez said.

Attending night classes, Martinez gained skills in business administration and project management that have been instrumental in creating new opportunities for the company.

"The services were customized and helped assess our strengths, challenges and needs," he said. "The program equipped us with the information we needed to know to get started and take our business to the next level and successfully compete for Tollway work."

There are two levels in the program for participating companies: Level 1 is for companies with no experience bidding on Tollway projects, while Level 2 companies have some experience working with the Tollway but are looking to expand their partnerships with the agency.

The skills he gained through the Technical Assistance program have allowed Martinez Frogs to expand beyond Tollway projects, though Martinez says he will continue to participate in the program to gain additional skills that will help keep his company growing.



continued on page 4

"The Technical Assistance Program has helped our business grow," Martinez said. "I encourage other businesses to look into the program and take advantage of its development opportunities that will help your business achieve more opportunities."

Since its inception, the Tollway's Technical Assistance Program has provided support and training to more than 680 firms working to succeed and grow. There are 12 locations providing technical assistance for emerging businesses in Chicago, Cook County, the south suburbs and Rockford.

As a result of the Tollway's investment in the program, approximately 1,766 bids have been submitted by clients since 2017, including 377 on Tollway projects. In 2019, 167 of the bids submitted on Tollway projects resulted in 34 firms winning work as primes or subcontractors on 25 contracts.

Information on the Illinois Tollway's Technical Assistance Program and how to get started can be found by visiting the [Illinois Tollway's website](#).

ILLINOIS TOLLWAY BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS WITH DIVERSE FIRMS DURING 2020 CONSTRUCTION SEASON

January 2021

Despite dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Illinois Tollway in 2020 succeeded in providing diverse firms with greater opportunities to participate in its *Move Illinois* Capital Program as minority-owned businesses last year won construction contracts worth \$348 million, or nearly 26 percent of the \$1.34 billion in contracts awarded.

That's a jump from 2019, when small, diverse and veteran-owned firms won about 22 percent of the \$655 million in construction contracts awarded by the Tollway in the ninth year of its 15-year, \$14 billion *Move Illinois* Program.

Diverse firms won an even bigger share in 2020 of contracts for professional design and engineering services, with minority-owned businesses winning 62 percent of the \$169 million in contracts awarded—nearly double the share of those contracts D/M/WBE firms won in 2019.

Increasing participation by D/M/WBE firms in Tollway

projects not only benefits those businesses, but also increases competition for agency contracts, typically resulting in the Tollway paying lower costs for roadway work.

"We're pleased that our efforts to support diverse businesses are resulting in more of these firms winning contracts to work on our *Move Illinois* program, which helps those business flourish and provides an expanded pool of qualified contractors who are able to bid on future contracts," said Illinois Tollway Executive Director José Alvarez. "Even with this progress, we know we have more work to do to ensure the businesses and workers delivering these roadway improvements are as diverse as the communities we serve across northern Illinois."

The value of contracts won by African American-owned construction firms and Hispanic-owned construction firms soared in 2020 compared to the previous year.



continued on page 5

African American-owned firms won construction contracts valued at \$37.6 million, an increase of nearly 150 percent from the \$15.2 million in construction contracts awarded to those businesses in 2019.

Hispanic-owned construction businesses won contracts valued at \$158 million in 2020, a nearly 160 percent increase from the \$61 million in construction contracts awarded to Hispanic-owned firms in 2019.

Hispanic-owned and African American owned professional services firms also saw substantial increases in the value of Tollway contracts won in 2020.

African American-owned design and engineering businesses in 2020 won contracts valued at \$38.4 million, nearly double the \$19.3 million in contracts they won the previous year, while Hispanic-owned design and engineering firms were awarded contracts valued at \$17.7 million in 2020, a 72 percent increase from the \$12.8 million in contracts won in 2019.

Diverse firms are playing a significant role in some ongoing Tollway roadway projects, including the replacement of the Mile Long Bridge on the Tri-State Tollway (I-294).

The Mile Long Bridge construction contract approved in 2020 by the Tollway Board is the second of two construction contracts for work to remove and rebuild the twin bridge structures carrying northbound and southbound traffic as part of the \$4 billion Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) Project.

Approval of the new \$182.6 million contract, including \$34.7 million going to diverse and veteran-owned firms, funds construction of a new southbound bridge structure and removal of the two existing structures. The initial \$184.6 million contract to rebuild the northbound structure was approved by the Tollway in April 2019 and included \$33 million for diverse and veteran-owned firms.

Through 2020, about \$8.7 billion has been invested by the Tollway since the *Move Illinois* Program began in 2012, with more than \$2 billion of that total committed to small, diverse and veteran-owned firms.

To achieve these results, the Tollway has built a strong procurement compliance team to ensure construction contractors and engineering consultants strive to meet Tollway goals for participation by diverse firms.

The Tollway also is developing a new study that will update our diversity baseline and help the agency achieve its goals of maximizing ongoing and future diversity initiatives.

The Tollway is committed to continuing its efforts to empower disadvantaged, minority- and women-owned firms, along with small and veteran-owned businesses, to compete for agency contracts and participate in building and improving its roads.





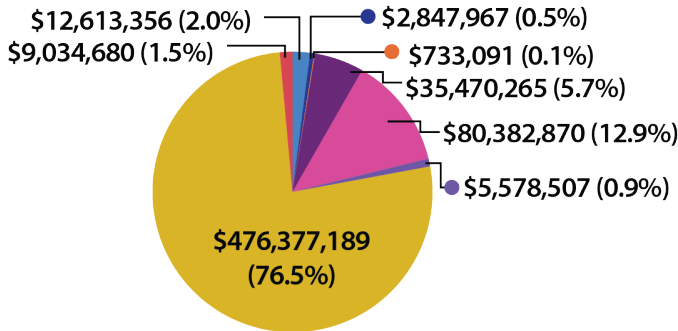
ILLINOIS TOLLWAY CAPITAL INVESTMENT DIVERSITY

CONSTRUCTION AWARDS

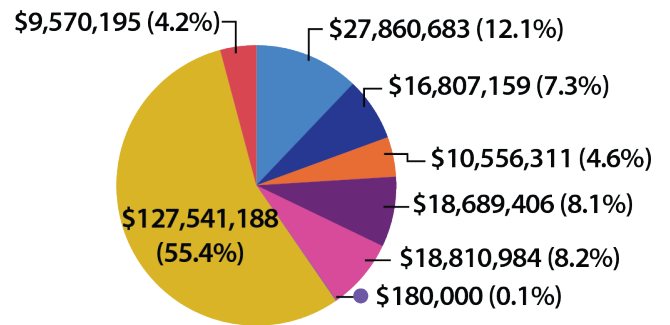
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AWARDS

- Non-DBE/Vet
- African American
- Asian Pacific
- Native American
- VOSB
- Asian Indian
- Hispanic
- WBE

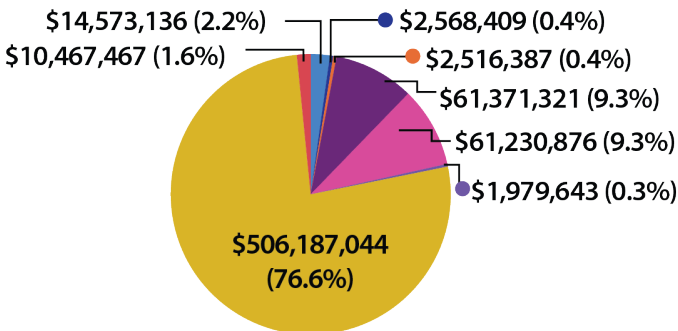
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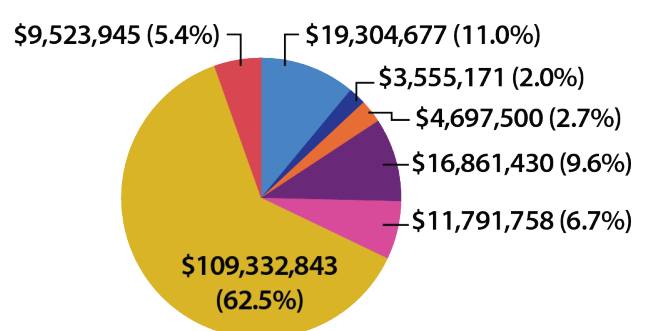
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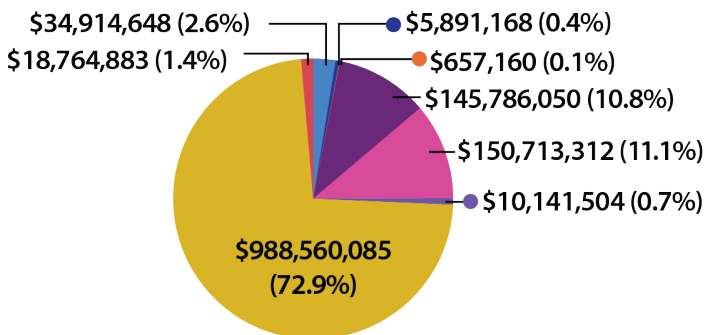
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