



November/December 2008

Accelerate

The bi-monthly information source for the Conference Of Minority Transportation Officials

Challenges and Opportunities: Braintrust Addresses Workforce Diversity in Transportation

COMTO partnered with Rep. **Elijah Cummings** (D-Md.) to host the 16th Annual Congressional Black Caucus Foundation/COMTO Transportation Braintrust on Thursday, September 25. About 150 transportation officials, contractors, and other industry leaders gathered at the DC Convention



Chairman James Oberstar addressing the transportation braintrust panel and audience

Center on a rainy afternoon to hear five panelists and four members of Congress discuss the topic, *Less than the Best: The Shocking Reality About Diversity in the Transporta-*

tion Industry.

“COMTO has taken on a major initiative to see diversity in this industry improve,” **Julie Cunningham**, COMTO’s president and CEO, said in her opening remarks. “COMTO’s place at the table is a given, not an option.”

The first panelist to address the group was **Robert Skinner**, executive director of the Transportation Research Board, who talked about the findings of two broad studies conducted by the TRB regarding state departments of transportation (DOTs) and the challenge of creating a diverse workforce. These studies revealed that the missions of state DOTs have expanded in recent years, with many adopting responsibilities for rail and airports as well as highways. Yet the workforce of state DOTs is decreasing and aging. In fact, 50 percent of state DOT employees will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years, about twice the average in other fields.

“Even if the workforce is terrific, it’s going to turn over,” said Skinner. He added that recruiting for public agencies faces major obsta-



Congressman Elijah Cummings, Transportation Braintrust host, addresses attendees

cles, namely “rule-bound, seniority-based cultures,” inflexible work schedules, compensation that is not competitive with the private industry, and a culture that does not hold public servants in high esteem. Also, state DOTs are increasingly outsourcing, so creating a diverse workforce means not only addressing employment at the state level, but in the contracting community as well.

“We don’t have a good idea for how well we’re doing,” said Skinner. “Our studies found that there were a lot of shortcomings in how we

think about workforce issues.” This is compounded by the fact that, although state DOTs are supposed to report data related to the number of women and minorities they employ, it is not being done consistently.

This led to the report of the next speaker, **Lawrence Mason Oramalu** of the University of Minnesota, who spoke about the Transit Cooperative Research Program’s (TCRP) benchmarking study to determine racial and gender diversity at state DOTs and transit agencies. The goal of the study was to identify sources of existing data, assess the quality of that data, identify gaps, and establish a baseline.

Researchers found that inconsistent reporting of data made establishing a baseline difficult at best. The report revealed that mandatory EEO forms were not provided or available for all 52 state DOTs, and only 30 of the 52 DOTs provided both incumbency/utilization data and availability data. Further, sources of data were inconsistent—some used the Census while

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From Bus Lot to Executive Suite: The Extraordinary Career Path of Lovevett Williams

Lovevett Williams is the Deputy Director of the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), having risen through the ranks over the past 29 years from bus operator to the top of the administrative ladder. Along the way, she's learned some lessons she's quick to share.



Lovevett Williams

"I'm especially proud of the team building I've accomplished during my career," she notes. "No one individual can accomplish much if you don't have a team that supports your vision and your goals. Having everyone working toward a common goal is by

far the most important step in developing and maintaining a strong transit agency."

"I'm also a big fan of transit training seminars," Lovevett says. "I advise everyone entering this industry to take full advantage of every training seminar offered. Next to earning a college degree, preferably in a business discipline, seminars are the best way to grow in this industry. They provide the fastest, easiest avenue for gaining an understanding of transit fundamentals ... fundamentals that can mean big promotions down the line."

Above all, Lovevett is a fierce advocate of mentoring. "Claryce Gibbons-Allen, the retired Director of DDOT, was instrumental in my success. She challenged me almost daily to do things outside my comfort zone. Many times I was

unhappy with the assignments she gave me, because they were often totally unrelated to my primary responsibilities. I soon came to realize, however, that those assignments had a purpose: to help me develop an understanding of every facet of the transit industry. In retrospect, I'm so thankful for the challenges she made me face, and I make every effort to mentor others coming up through the system just as she mentored me."

Although Lovevett has had a number of professional mentors during her remarkable transportation industry career, none of them has had as much of an impact on that career as her son, Bryan.

"When Bryan was five years old, he told me he wanted to be a bus driver just like me. I was touched," Lovevett remembers, "and I wanted to show him it was just fine to want to be like Mom, but, at the same time, I wanted so much more for him. I decided right then and there to return to school to complete my college degree."

The rest, as they say, is history.

Lovevett has seen many positive changes in the industry over the years. When she first began her career, the DDOT management team was dominated by men. "Today," she says, "the majority of the management team here are minority women. I'd like to see other transit systems across the country follow our lead to

become more diverse in their management teams."

And what about the future? Lovevett isn't content to seek out a comfort zone any longer. "My goal is to become the CEO of a large urban transit system. I believe transit is the key to improving the quality of life in our communities, and I want to be instrumental in bringing it all together."

From the bus lot to the executive suite. Who would have guessed it would all come to pass because of a simple comment from a five-year-old little boy? ■

Dr. Beverly A. Scott and Mattie P. Carter Elected as New APTA Chair and Vice-Chair

Beverly A. Scott, Ph.D., general manager of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, was elected 2008-2009 chair of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) during the 2008 APTA Annual

Meeting and Expo in San Diego. The association also elected **Mattie P. Carter**, a commissioner of the Memphis Area Transit Authority, first vice chair, the first time in APTA's history that both the chair and the first vice chair are women. ■

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(202) 530-0551 ext. 309

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Chapter Financials –
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National Calendar
(202) 530-0551 ext. 306

Worth Repeating

"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Michael Jordan

NATIONAL NEWS

COMTO Awarded Cooperative Agreement with FTA to Develop International Initiatives

COMTO National is pleased to announce that it has been awarded another cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to oversee international initiatives. The initiatives will help cultivate relationships, share best practices and develop innovations with countries abroad, as well as provide technical assistance to

developing countries.

Julie A. Cunningham, COMTO President and CEO, was recently invited by the Honorable James Simpson, FTA Administrator, to join an FTA delegation to London, England. Furthermore, COMTO will coordinate an international conference in Panama in February or March of 2009. Please stay tuned for further details! ■

TCRP Ambassador Program

*Volunteer, Travel, Network...
Spread the News*



We're Looking for Ambassadors!

The TCRP Ambassador Program is a joint effort between the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Transit Research Board (TRB), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the Conference Of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO). The program's purpose is to develop a cadre of talented industry professionals who will serve as "Ambassadors" to enhance the understanding, acceptance and utilization of TCRP sponsored research products.



What is An Ambassador?

TCRP Ambassadors are selected for their ability to successfully implement research that improves transit operations and service, and motivate and instruct others on how to use the research results or products.

What Does an Ambassador Do?

Ambassadors disseminate important TCRP research with the transit community. Examples include visits to transit properties; presentations; seminars and workshops conducted at transit industry conferences; participation in TCRP events; and interviews with transit-related media.

How Can I Become an Ambassador?

Recruiting is now open for ambassadors for 2009-2011. The deadline to submit applications is Friday, December 19, 2008. Selected ambassadors will train in March 2009. To learn more about the program and to download an application visit:

<http://www.comto.org/news-tcrp.php>

Submit your application or nomination to:

Conference Of Minority Transportation Officials
Attn: TCRP Ambassador Program
818 18th Street NW - Suite 850
Washington, DC 20006

fax (202) 530-0617



Board of Directors Expects Initiative to Help COMTO HUBs Succeed in Business

With the installation of **Al Brunson** as its new Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Advisor, the COMTO Board of Directors expects the HUB initiative detailed in its recent Strategic Plan to take on a full head of steam. This means HUBs across the country who would like to begin doing business with transit systems should get onboard immediately.

The initiative lists four objectives for the COMTO HUB Advisory Council. And, while the Council is certainly not bound by these four objectives alone, Brunson plans to concentrate on them just the same. The four objectives are:

1. Increase HUB member-

ship in COMTO by establishing COMTO as THE industry's single-point facilitator for connecting HUBs with organizations looking to team with them.

2. Develop a comprehensive database of HUB firms and their capabilities. This database will be accessible to all COMTO members looking to subcontract with or develop joint ventures with HUBs. This will be the premier database in the country for firms seeking to establish relationships with qualified HUBs for DOT contract opportunities.

3. Foster business development opportunities for HUBs by providing assistance in securing capital, bonding or other financial assistance. These development opportunities will be

monitored by a "report card" analysis system to help determine whether COMTO's HUBs are getting their "fair share."

4. Develop training, technical assistance and mentoring opportunities for COMTO HUBs. Through a sophisticated continuing education program, COMTO will help HUBs become successful entities, with the goal of "graduating" ... that is, becoming successful enough so they no longer qualify as "underutilized."

The advantages, then, of HUBs becoming members of COMTO seems quite clear. Here is an opportunity for a small, disadvantaged business to rely on one source for business opportunities within the transportation

industry, including state DOTs, port authorities, public transit agencies and airports.

This agenda is further reinforced by COMTO's overall mission to ensure a level playing field and to maximize participation in the transportation industry for minority individuals, businesses and communities of color through advocacy, information sharing and professional development.

Becoming a COMTO member is easy, and companies that qualify as HUBs can take advantage of reduced membership rates. Go to www.comto.org for further details, or call the COMTO office at (202) 530-0551 .

Incidentally, for purposes of HUB membership, COMTO includes DBEs, WBEs, SBEs, VBEs, DVBEs, small busi-



Welcome New Members

Arizona

Mr. Harold Tye

At Large

Mr. Billy Wingfield

Atlanta

Mr. Ortez Gude
Mr. Greg Holloman

Cleveland

Miss Bobbie Barnett
Ms. Anita Lopes

Colorado State

Ms. Elizabeth Hoaglund
Ms. Lupe Jones

Ms. Adrienne Sanford
Ms. Leah Ware

Dallas

Mr. Thurston O'Neal
Ms. Sharon N. Sneed

Detroit

Ms. Erika McBurrows
Mr. Edwin Tatem

Hampton Roads

Ms. Linda Gavoni
Ms. Bethann Shrum

Indiana

Mr. Alexander Borromeo
Ms. Paula Haskin

Maryland

Ms. D. Marlene Thomas
Mr. Albert Walker, Jr.

Miami

Mr. Horace Hudson
Mr. Errol Taylor

New York

Mr. Kodjovi Agassi
Ms. Tracey Bessellieu
Ms. Maria C. Garcia
Mr. Marvin Lewis
Mr. Ram Tirumala
Ms. Jahaira Vasquez

North California

Ms. Christina Grossenbacher

Philadelphia

Mr. Christopher Diamond
Mr. Richard J. Dickerson
Mr. Marcus Gonzales

Tampa

Mrs. Simone Barefield
Ms. Brenda Mowen

Utah

Ms. Grace Torres

Washington, DC

Ms. Allegra F. McCullough
Mr. Jerome McNeil

HUB, continued

nesses and 8As.

Mark your calendars for an event on March 5-6, 2009 on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. COMTO's annual "View from the Hill" provides a forum where policy makers are invited to speak on transportation related legislation and other pertinent issues. As part of the event, a HUB reception will be held to give HUBs an opportunity to meet other industry professionals and to market their services. ■

APTA/COMTO HUB Reception a Great Success

For many years, COMTO and APTA have worked collaboratively on programs designed to strengthen and expand economic opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses. One of these initiatives is the co-hosted HUB reception at APTA's annual conference/expo.

This year APTA's Expo was held in San Diego, California. The APTA/COMTO reception took place in the Marriott immediately following a panel discussion on HUBs. The newly elected APTA Chair, **Dr. Beverly A. Scott**, offered a warm welcome and some brief remarks. COMTO's National Chair, **Shirley A. DeLibero**, also spoke. More than 15 HUBs participated.

The reception was so successful and so well attended it ran more than 30 minutes past its scheduled time. Next year's reception promises to be even more successful.

2008-2010 Committee/Council Chairs and Members

Academic Advisory Council

Ms. Deborah Underwood,
Chair

Bylaws Committee

Ms. Loretta Kirk, *Chair*

Members

Bernard, Seraphin
Sampson, Dwayne
Willis, Renee'

HUB Advisory Council

Mr. Al Brunson, *Chair*

Members

Adams Sr., Phillip
Barnes, Art
Bell, Debra
Broxton, Pat
Collier, Mary
Haggerty, Stacey
Holness, Julio
Hubbard, Wanda
Jenifer, Gregory
Kyle, Dierdre
Mack, Gabriele
Middleton, Ken
Miles, Delceno
Nnambi, Brenda
Swayzer, Michele
Taylor, Lamont
Thompson, Deborah
Wright, Degas

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Members

August, Ann
Beverly, Anita
Brabson, Kathie
Davis, Anasa
Foster, Saundra
Hawkins Jr., Curvie
Montgomery, Stephone
Mulchand, Sharad
Rolle-Scott, Melissa
Scott, Will
Scroggins, Keith

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Co-Chair

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Martin, Quincey
St.Julien, Dolores
Tapia-Lopez, Emily
Taylor, Lamont
Workman, Patricia

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Perry, Ty
Roybal, Diana
Scott, Rockchild
Shazor, Marilyn
Smith, Carol
Smith, Stan

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Bradley, Roosevelt
Brunson, Al
Cooper, Shawn
DeLibero, Shirley A.
Douglas, Aida
Ferrell, Dwight
Hamilton-Kirkaldy, Cathy
Harris, Lyn
Kirk, Loretta
Mims, A. Bradley
Montague, Warren
Parker, Tom
Prince Jr., Robert
Smith, Ricky
Tyler, Bret
Woods Jr., Lester

Nominating Committee

TBD

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Bessellieu, Tracey
Burner, Lee
Fuller, Freddie
Poinsette, Toni
Roybal, Diana
Smith, Carol

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Mr. Maurice Lewis, *Co-Chair*

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Barnes, Rashidi
Bernard, Seraphin
Brown, Gary
Broxton, Pat
Cunningham, Ricky
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Hawkins, Curvie
Mulchand, Sharad
Smith, Stan
Tapia-Lopez, Emily
Taylor, Lamont
Workman, Patricia

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TBD

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Bessellieu, Tracey
Brown, Vincent
Burner, Lee
Cave, Charles
Covington, Vida
Davis, Anasa
Duran, Annie
Ermeti, Sara
Hofman, Harold
Jefferson, Audrey
Landell, Rick
Newkirk, Jettie
Underwood, Deborah

Youth Symposium Subcommittee

Ms. Jennifer Jones, *Chair*

Members

Ayele, Moges
Brown, Gary
Cave, Charles
Croffie, Francis
Davis, Anasa
Duran, Annie
Haggerty, Stacey
Hofman, Harold
Jefferson, Audrey
Landell, Rick
Panton, Thalia

COMTO USA

Exciting news! The Detroit Chapter is once again up and reactivated! They are ready to *Move the Nation* under the leadership of **Alicia Evans Suber**, Chapter President. To join the Detroit Chapter, please contact Ms. Suber at subera@michigan.gov. Please help us in welcoming them back!

Braintrust, from page 1

others used their state's numbers.

Of those who used Census data, some pulled from 1990, others from 2000. "You can't compare apples and oranges," Oramalu said. Yet the lack of data uniformity resulted in doing just that. Oramalu concluded her talk by saying that a comprehensive, consistent tracking system must be established so the industry can have a clearer idea of exactly how many women and minorities are working for DOTs and in what capacity.

But the Braintrust didn't deliver only bad news. Panelist **Pete Rahn**, president of the Missouri Department of Transportation, talked about the great success MoDOT has had in diversifying its workforce for the rebuilding of 10 miles of highway through the city of St. Louis. When the \$535 million project began, MoDOT was approached by Metropolitan Congregations United, which made the case for employing people in the community through which the highway was running. MoDOT saw this as an opportunity to provide real training, employment, and the chance for upward mobility to a community that has struggled with poverty and unemployment. So

COMTO 2008-2009 Calendar of Events

November 2008

Thursday and Friday, November 27-28, 2008
National Office Closed
Thanksgiving

December 2008

Wednesday and Thursday, December 24-25, 2008
National Office Closed
Christmas

January 2009

Thursday, January 1, 2009
National Office Closed
New Year's Day

Monday, January 19, 2009
National Office Closed
Martin Luther King Day

February 2009

Monday, February 16, 2009
National Office Closed
Presidents' Day

May 2009

Monday, May 25, 2009
National Office Closed
Memorial Day

September 2009

Monday, September 7, 2009
National Office Closed
Labor Day

October 2009

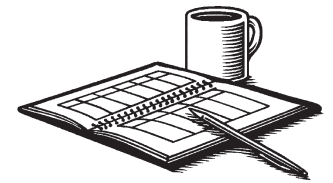
Monday, October 12, 2009
National Office Closed
Columbus Day

November 2009

Thursday and Friday, November 26-27, 2009
National Office Closed
Thanksgiving

December 2009

Thursday and Friday, December 24-25, 2009
National Office Closed
Christmas



MoDOT sat down with labor unions, community organizations, contractors and others "to find a way to get everyone to work together to provide opportunities for a diverse workforce."

The result was a commitment of \$2.5 million to training programs and an agreement by contractors that they employ a *minimum* of 20 percent on-the-job-training (OJT), economically disadvantaged employees. "We told them that we were going to hold them to this," said Rahn. They would be financially penalized if they didn't meet this goal, and rewarded it if they surpassed it. The result has been an extremely successful, racially diverse workforce with little turnover (out of 60 workers, the project has only lost one) that is providing real training to a community that had previously had few employment opportunities.

The fourth panelist to present was **Simone Gans Barefield**, president of a minority recruiting firm, who talked about how organizations can effectively recruit and retain minorities in CEO and other executive positions. "Diversity means inclusion," she said. "We're not saying, 'This is who you have to hire.' We're saying, 'Include a diverse slate of candidates and the cream will rise to the top.'"

She noted that one of the challenges of getting organizations to buy into this is that most don't fully understand the benefits of a diverse workforce, specifically an improved bottom line, improved competence of the management team, and increased confidence among consumers and constituents. She added that minority recruitment has to be a priority within the organization: "If the organization's leader-

ship is not committed to the concept of diversity, it gets in the way of retention."

She then provided practical advice for those in the transportation industry looking to recruit minority executives, stressing that they look outside the industry for leaders in other areas who might be ready to change careers. In addition, organizations needed to abandon the "rule-bound, seniority-based culture" that Skinner talked about and "bring people in at the top" so they can affect change at the lower levels.

Mike Trujillo with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Civil Rights was the final panelist of the day to speak, sharing with attendees the success the DOT has had in introducing a management accountability program. The program was created a few years ago and uses a human

capital scorecard to identify key initiatives within DOT organizations and holds leaders accountable for the results. Once every four months, representatives from the human resources, civil rights and legal departments within each organization sit down to review the scorecard, identifying successes and areas for improvement. The results are summarized annually and shared with the secretary of transportation.

“If there’s one thing we’ve learned: before the scorecard became their tool, most of what we talked about and included on it was not even on [the organization’s] radar screens.” Introducing the scorecard has ensured that these issues are front and center.

In addition to the panelists, several members of Congress stopped by to address the group—despite a busy day on the Hill debating the financial bailout package. **Rep. Jim Oberstar** (D-Minn.), who chairs the House transportation and infrastructure committee, **Rep. Laura Richardson** (D-Calif.), **Rep. Elijah Cummings** (D-Md.), and **Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson** (D-Tex.) all talked about the increasingly important role transportation will play in the nation’s economy, and the need to provide more opportunities to underrepresented populations in the industry.

Chairman Oberstar talked at length about his efforts to safeguard the DBE designation in the transportation reauthorization bill to ensure a level playing field for women- and minority-owned businesses, despite heavy opposition from congressional Republicans and the administration. “We have to win this battle every day—every time we confront a reauthorization,” he said.

Rep. Cummings, who hosted the Braintrust, added

Money Sense

Oil Prices: Long Term Change or Bubble?

A barrel of crude oil is just below \$140, when just last June it was at approximately \$70 per barrel. What



Degas Wright

has happened to cause the cost of fuel to skyrocket by approximately 100%?

One reason is that global

demand is increasing due to nations, like China, which have experienced growth in manufacturing and a growing middle class. A second reason is that the supply of oil is being kept low by OPEC and other oil producing nations. And a third cause is speculation among oil traders. The million-dollar question becomes, what can we do about it?

In the short run, we can’t do anything about it! Yes, consumers can decide to take fewer — or shorter — vehicle trips to reduce their fuel expense. The outlook for fuel prices is that we will be in a price range of \$4 to \$5 per gallon for at least the next year. Given this outlook, consumers will change spending habits to be able to afford the higher price at the pump by spending less discretionary income on non-essential items.

In the long run, however, there are several options that we can address with their leg-

islators. Currently, the federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFÉ) program has set increased standards for fuel efficiency for U.S. vehicles. With this program in place, we will still be dependent on oil — just less of it.

A second option is to allow drilling for oil reserves within environmentally restricted areas in the United States. In 2006, the U.S. Interior Department’s Bureau of Land Management reported that 99-million acres are restricted from drilling. This land contains 187-trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 21-million barrels of oil, **or 76% of onshore federal oil and gas resources.**

A longer term option is to encourage technological development of alternate fuel sources, such as ethanol and electricity. These alternatives will require a national strategy and several years to implement. However, our dependence on diesel fuel will continue to expose our economy to future volatility.

The fact that consumers will be driving less seems like a nice boost for the transit industry. However, many transit agencies depend on the same fuel that motorists use, so how can they cope? Some, like the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) have established multi-year fuel budgets by entering into fuel hedge programs, contractual

agreements to buy a certain quantity of fuel from a fuel hedge firm at a fixed price in order to ensure against unexpectedly steep increases in fuel.

Davis Allen, AGM/ Finance for MARTA, oversees both the diesel and compressed natural gas fuel hedge programs for the transit agency. He notes that his agency was able to lock in fuel prices over the past four years that resulted in savings of over \$14-million!

Transit agencies are not the only ones using fuel hedge programs to control their fuel costs. Southwest Airlines has historically maintained multiple year fuel hedge contracts, enabling them to offer their customers lower fares compared to their competitors.

Unfortunately, these hedge programs are not being offered to consumers. The best advice, then, is to revisit your personal budget and get accustomed to \$4/gallon gasoline! ■

Degas A. Wright, CFA is Chief Investment Officer with Decatur Capital Management, Inc., an investment advisory firm managing equity investments for pension plans. He initially joined COMTO as a member in 1991 and is currently a HUB member.

that a diverse workforce starts at the top. “We have to ask ourselves: who’s doing the hiring? We’ve got to have key people in positions who are competent and have confidence in their competence, and who are bold enough to

stand up for what’s right...We can work all we want but we have to have people who are bold enough to be fair.”

COMTO Board Chair **Shirley A. DeLibero** echoed these sentiments in her closing remarks, stating that

those in leadership positions need to “remember where we’ve come from and fight the fight.” Only in doing so can the industry expect to see a truly diverse workforce that represents the real America. ■



Accelerate is a bi-monthly publication produced by the Conference Of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO), 818 18th St. NW, Suite 850, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 530-0551. Articles may not be reproduced without written permission from COMTO.

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COMTO Vision Statement

To see the diverse faces of America equally reflected in all levels of the transportation industry – (Resolution adopted May 8, 2007)

COMTO Mission Statement

To ensure a level playing field and maximum participation in the transportation industry for minority individuals, businesses, and communities of color through advocacy, information sharing, training, educational and professional development.

COMTO Core Values

COMTO's core values are embodied in how we conduct business and how we interact with our stakeholders, including our members, customers, partners and supporters. We affirm and are committed to the following core values: Advocacy, Diversity, Excellence, Inclusion, Innovation, Integrity, and Service.

2008-2010 Board of Directors

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