

## **North Texas Tollway Authority Diversity Program Surpasses 30 Percent for Second Year in a Row**

*North Texas Tollway Authority diversity program surpassed 30 percent participation for second year in a row. The ROAD mentoring program helped smaller companies grow capacity for bigger projects.*

Dallas, Texas ([PRWEB](#)) June 28, 2016 -- The North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) released its diversity participation numbers and for the second year in a row contract spending with disadvantaged-, minority-, or women-owned business enterprises has surpassed 30 percent.

The NTTA implemented several outreach and diversity participation strategies beginning in 2009, including the Relationships and Opportunities Advancing Diversity (ROAD) program. “Through the ROAD program NTTA has paired 31 minority- or women-owned businesses with larger prime contractors in the mentorship program,” explained Anthony Coleman, NTTA Director of Business Diversity. “The NTTA diversity participation numbers are up 24 percent since the ROAD program started.”

In 2008 NTTA spent \$432 million on road projects, awarding \$63 million to D/M/WBEs. Of that amount \$10 million went to D/M/WBE prime contractors.

In 2015 NTTA spent a total of \$164 million dollars on contracts, awarding \$50 million to D/M/WBEs. Of that amount \$31 million went to D/M/WBE prime contractors.

NTTA developed the ROAD partnering program to enhance the opportunities for disadvantaged-, minority-, and women-owned businesses to work on agency projects. The core of the ROAD program is to create an atmosphere where business relationships can flourish. It allows smaller companies to participate in larger projects that they may not currently have the capacity to handle. It also gives them much needed experience and exposure to skill sets they sought to develop in the past and provides opportunities for training in new growth areas.

A P Engineering Consultant, Inc. (APEC) credits the ROAD program with enabling it to build capacity, increase revenues, and create sustainability through continuous work on the NTTA General Engineering Consultant (GEC) solicitation. “Without the ROAD program, my firm would not have stood much of a chance to be able to participate in large projects,” said Anuj M. Patel, President of APEC.

From 2011 through 2013, ROAD paired APEC with mentor Atkins, a worldwide design, engineering, and project management consultancy. Atkins and APEC teamed up, responded to NTTA’s GEC solicitation, and won the contract. As prime consultant, Atkins supports bond-related services for NTTA, and APEC has conducted peer reviews and participated in annual inspections.

“ROAD fits hand-in-glove with Atkins’ culture of developing strong relationships with small businesses to form successful partnerships that meet the needs of clients,” explained R. Keith Jackson, P.E., Vice President, Atkins. “We have found the program so beneficial that we promote the concept to other clients.”

HNTB Corporation and EJES began their ROAD partnership six years ago. Through that relationship their team is working on the NTTA Program Management Consultant contract. EJES is providing project management support to HNTB on the project. EJES performs database administration, contract administration, construction

management oversight, and PS&E design review.

In order for the NTTA ROAD program to work, there has to be an environment where both companies feel safe and secure in sharing information and challenges. “EJES was able to express company challenges faced in the architect/engineering industry and to receive sound advice from HNTB’s wealth of knowledge,” said Edwin Jones, CEO/President of EJES, Incorporated. “EJES has gained a vast amount of knowledge that has assisted in the growth and development of the company, both operationally and in business development.”

HNTB and EJES have partnered on several pursuits and were recently selected for the TxDOT GEC team. “HNTB has thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the NTTA R.O.A.D program and has learned from and built strong relationships with each of our partners” says Michael Hegarty, HNTB Vice President and North Texas Office Leader.

“The ROAD program has increased the number of ready, willing, and able companies to compete for projects in addition to creating a potentially larger subcontracting pool of construction services and professional services candidates,” explained Anthony Coleman.

While not all ROAD teams resulted in NTTA work, the teams still consider the relationship productive. Jacobs Engineering Group and AGUIRRE RODEN were paired up through the ROAD program in 2014. They have not been able to bid on a NTTA project together, but they have used the ROAD concepts to strengthen their working relationship on a five-year DFW Airport project.

Peter Aguirre, CFM Senior Vice President of AGUIRRE RODEN, says his company has developed a robust program from being mentored by Jacobs. “The ROAD program has been a holistic approach in which every part of our company benefited. This resulted in process improvement from sales to accounting to production for our team,” said Peter Aguirre.

The Jacob-AGUIRRE RODEN relationship is an example of how the ROAD mentor/protégé program is not just a one-way street with the protégé receiving all the benefits. AGUIRRE RODEN led the training on successful hiring practices and Jacobs has incorporated some of those procedures into their practice. “Discussion with AGUIRRE RODEN has helped us with the on-boarding experience of our employees,” said Spenta F. Irani, P.E., Transportation Manager for Jacobs. “This program has provided us with good practices from smaller firms and shown us how we can utilize those to enhance our business.”

Under the ROAD program, mentors and protégés meet on a regular basis to build their strategic partnership. ROAD also has a networking component that allows all the prime contractors and sub-contractors in the program to become better acquainted through quality time at various events.

After six years the NTTA ROAD program is seeing a second generation of mentors ... subcontractors that started out in the program as mentees, have now become primes and mentors to other subcontractors in the ROAD program.

EJES has moved from mentee to mentor to smaller businesses. In 2014 it became a mentor to Design Consulting Engineers (DCE) through the ROAD program.

“EJES assisted us in developing marketing strategies and business development relationships with the City of Dallas and DFW Airport projects, said DCE President Mannan Abdul, P.E.



“We provide added value to the mentoring program because of our understanding of the challenges small businesses face that larger firms are unable to address,” said Edwin Jones, CEO/President of EJES.

“Since 2009, the volunteer-based Relationships and Opportunities Advancing Diversity (ROAD) program has helped build relationships between prime contractors and consultants who otherwise wouldn’t have the platform to connect,” concluded Anthony Coleman.



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