Washington State Department of Transportation

SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program

Diversity and inclusive contracting

SR 520 Quarterly Progress Report

April - June 2015

Quarter Highlights

WSDOT, SR 520 Program strengthen DBE commitment

State Transportation Secretary Lynn Peterson issued an executive order in May 2015 aimed at boosting WSDOT's efforts to increase contract opportunities for disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs). As a result, the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program set a goal to award 9 percent of its architecture and engineering (A&E) contract dollars to businesses owned by women and minorities. This voluntary goal gained new significance when the 2015 Legislature passed a major transportation package – Connecting Washington – that includes $1.64 billion in funding for design and construction of SR 520's segment from I-5 to Lake Washington. This represents a significant contracting opportunity for MWDBE firms.

Open house draws crowd to learn about SR 520 contract opportunities

Staff with the SR 520 Program and other state agencies held an open house in Seattle on June 2 to share information with MWDBE firms interested in architecture and engineering contracts. Read more about the meeting in this report's Outreach & Networking section.

Safe Harbor a great tool for DBEs

Small businesses interested in being certified as a women-owned or minority-owned contractor with WSDOT need an accounting system that complies with federal regulations. WSDOT's Safe Harbor Program helps businesses learn the steps to gain compliance. Check out our Safe Harbor webpage to help you get started.

Our Commitment to Fairness in Contracting

WSDOT and the SR 520 Program are committed to providing opportunities for small businesses owned by individuals who are at a social or economic disadvantage in securing government contracts or procurement. We establish specific targets for our construction contractors to subcontract with disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) – and we hold contractors responsible for meeting those targets. On the SR 520 Program, we also set a voluntary goal for our architecture and engineering contracts – aiming for 9 percent of upcoming work to go to MWDBE firms.

Outreach & Networking

The SR 520 Program elevated its outreach to disadvantaged businesses following the adoption of a voluntary DBE goal for the highway program's architecture and engineering contracts. Led by the SR 520 Diversity and Inclusion Manager Regina Glenn, key outreach and networking efforts in the second quarter of 2015 included:

- Compiling a database of 255 firms registered with the Washington State Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprise (OMWBE).
- Inviting all firms in the SR 520 database to an Outreach and Inclusion Open House, held June 2 in downtown Seattle; and promoting the event in targeted media and community organizations.
- Sharing information about DBE-qualification requirements and SR 520 contracting opportunities with 76 representatives of 66 current or potential DBE firms at the June 2 open house. Nearly two dozen government, business, and nonprofit organizations also attended the forum and shared information.
- Meeting or corresponding with potential DBE consulting firms to exchange information and provide advice on DBE qualifications and requirements.

Interagency Coordination and Promoting Washington Small Businesses

During the second quarter of 2015, the SR 520 Diversity and Inclusion team:

- Collaborated with regulatory agencies that approve audited rates and certification of MWDBE firms.
- Met monthly with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity, and had ongoing communications with WSDOT's Consultant Services Office and the state Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises.
- Met with the diversity offices at Sound Transit and the University of Washington, and gave DBE presentations to community organizations and DBE advocacy groups.
- Supported Secretary Peterson's July 2015 Executive Order on WSDOT emphases and expectations in the following ways: personally networked with over 255 certified MWDBE and small firms to inform them about opportunities to work on the SR 520 A&E project; got to know the firms and their qualifications and helped them network with prime contractors; worked with the WSDOT DBE program to provide necessary training and monitoring to achieve WSDOT goals; encouraged small firms owned by minorities to educate themselves on successful business management, getting certified and obtaining audited rates.
- We will continue to employ our prompt payments and our monthly tracking. We will also elevate potential problems through monthly meetings with the WSDOT Office of Equal Opportunity to quickly resolve any issues prior to project completion.

Community Partnerships

As part of the June 2 inclusive contracting opportunities open house in Seattle, the SR 520 team connected with many local community partners to share the business resources and event details with interested firms. Staff from many of these groups also attended the event to answer questions first-hand and network.

These groups included:

- The Breakfast Group
- Tabor 100
- National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC)
- Seattle University Innovation and Entrepeneurship Center
- North Seattle College Entrepeneur Success Center
- Northwest Mountain Minority Supplier Development Council
- Puget Sound Latino Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Seattle Chinese Chamber of Commerce
- African Chamber of Commerce of the Pacific Northwest
- Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce of Seattle
- Korean American Chamber of Commerce of Washington State
- Governor's Commissions on Ethnic Affairs
- Native Procurement Technical Assistance Center (Native PTAC)
- Washington State Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

Attendees at the June 2 open house event connect about SR 520 A&E contracting opportunities.

Steps to SR 520 A&E Contracting

- Technical disciplines that WSDOT expects to need help on SR 520's "Rest of the West" segment including project management, civil and utility design, traffic engineering, structural design, environmental studies and permitting, and architectural work.
- The SR 520 Diversity and Inclusion Manager recruited and sent requests for qualifications to 29 firms with certifications and audited rates on file with the state Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Manager is helping firms without approved audited rates gain knowledge of the Safe Harbor Program or Federal Acquisition Cost Requirements, and is tracking the process.

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Additional Resources

- WSDOT Office of Equal Opportunity
- WSDOT Internal Audit Office
- WSDOT Consultant Services Office
- Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises
- USDOT Small Business Transportation Resource Center
- Washington State Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

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