

Announcing The Grindly Johnson Inaugural Civil Rights Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Trailblazer Award



The Honorable Grindly Johnson was appointed Secretary of Administration by former Governor Ralph Northam and also held the role of Deputy Secretary of Administration. Grindly served as Deputy Secretary of Transportation of the Commonwealth of Virginia from 2014 to 2018. Johnson chaired the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) subcommittee on Civil Rights.

She spearheaded the development of the Commonwealth's first Business Opportunity and Workforce Development Center (BOWD), one of only 15 in the country, to provide disadvantaged business enterprise firms the resources needed to compete for federal-aided contracts. Johnson previously served as VDOT's Chief of Equal Business and Employee Opportunity and in several private sector positions she served as an accountant, financial analyst, and community relations consultant.

She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from Norfolk State University. She has received many community awards and recognitions, including the Community Star for Girls Inc., the fellow for the Sorenson Institute of Political Leadership, and the fellow for the American Swiss Young Leaders.

The Grindly Johnson Inaugural Civil Rights Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Trailblazer Award is the highest award an individual or company can receive. The award honors outstanding leadership that significantly improves the mission of the Civil Rights Division and the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program. The recipient of this award must have undertaken a concerted, long-term effort to alleviate barriers and contribute to equity in the transportation industry, contract opportunities, and capital access. The recipient must have established and implemented programs or been responsible for notable advancements that demonstrated Inclusive Excellence that will increase business and job opportunities for women and minorities in the transportation industry.

Some Noteworthy and Distinguished Achievements make naming this Award after Honorable Grindly Johnson so Merited:

The VDOT BOWD Center

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Business Opportunity and Workforce Development (BOWD) Center provides targeted supportive services and workforce development assistance to Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms to be more competitive in pursuing federally funded contract opportunities. The BOWD Center Program is structured to develop

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qualified and diverse construction, consultant, hauling, and supplier firms to build and maintain Virginia's highway system.

Small Business Program

The Virginia Department of Transportation, in compliance with 49 CFR 26.39, is mandated to add a small business program element to its existing DBE program to foster small business participation in contracts. This program aims to augment race-neutral efforts to meet DBE goals. The Commonwealth of Virginia has an existing Small, Women, and Minority-owned (SWaM) Business Program that is race-neutral. The Commonwealth's efforts help small, women, and minority-owned businesses do business with state government entities. It is proposed that the existing SWaM Program with modifications can be utilized to meet the U.S. DOT's mandate that DOTs must structure contracting requirements to facilitate competition by small business concerns, taking all reasonable steps to eliminate obstacles to their participation.

Strategies for Small Business Participation

Regulations provide the opportunity to establish a race-neutral small business set aside for prime contracts under a stated amount as determined by VDOT. Small business set-aside projects could be aligned with projects where the bonding threshold is currently \$250,000 or within the limits of HB945. Small business set-asides to be considered for all types of procurements include, but are not limited to, construction and professional services. Small business set-asides can be handled through the current procurement process with little to no modification. I suggest that a committee or some mechanism be implemented to identify what projects will be deemed small business set-asides.

DBE Training Symposium

VDOT/Civil Rights Division conducts the Civil Rights Training Symposium, typically held annually in the spring for Civil Rights staff in the VDOT organization. The conference spans two and one-half (2 ½) consecutive weekdays.

DBE Awards Program

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) DBE Awards Program has established nine categories of awards to recognize outstanding contributions of DBE firms and Prime Contractors/Consultants that have supported the VDOT DBE Program. Each DBE or Prime Contractor/Consultant may submit their nomination(s) to the Awards Committee.

Establishing SWaM goals on Federal-Aid Funded Mega Projects.

It is also important to mention that our success in Virginia has even gone national because of her leadership. She was invited by the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Civil Rights to participate in a series of DBE Workshops nationwide to speak on Virginia's model for expanding opportunities for disadvantaged, small, minority, and women-owned businesses. Virginia's Small, Women, and Minority-owned Business (SWaM) program. This led to the implementation of FHWA's concurrence in setting DBE and SWaM goals on Downtown Tunnel/Midtown Tunnel/MLK Extension Project

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Road Map for DBE Toll Program

She partnered with HNTB to create a DBE Tolling 101 program for VDOT. Instead of deciding that there were no DBEs qualified to do tolling work, figure out a mentor/mentee Tolling Program for DBEs.

Toll Relief Program

With more tolling projects planned within the Commonwealth, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), she was committed to ensuring that the public is aware of the role tolling plays in delivering much-needed transportation improvements. In addition to implementing outreach and awareness initiatives designed to educate the public about the needs and benefits of mega/tolling projects and E-ZPass, VDOT is dedicated to assisting citizens impacted by tolls.

AASHTO Subcommittee Civil Rights Chair

She laid the foundation that catapulted the Civil Rights subcommittee playing a vital role in decision-making with the Board of Directors of AASTHO, a national DEI strategy adopted on November 13, 2020. The committee worked cooperatively with the Association's Member Departments and, as appropriate, with other committees, agencies, and external organizations to provide equal access and ensure nondiscrimination in all programs and activities involving Federal dollars. Includes researching and evaluating the effectiveness of civil rights programs and reporting findings of issues, as well as sharing any best practices to Member Departments on programs such as Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, Equal Employment Opportunity, On-The-Job Training, Non-Discrimination (Title VI), Americans with Disabilities Act and Supportive Services.

Conference on Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO)

COMTO's Celebrating Women Who Move the Nation (CWWMN) awards recognize the outstanding contributions of women leading and advancing America's transportation industry. Hosted annually in Washington, DC, during March, in observance of Women's History Month, this signature COMTO event celebrates women from all modes of transportation representing all industry sectors.

- Public Sector Award Winner – 2014 & 2016

Pay Equity Market Analysis

She ensured the employees of VDOT were paid equitably. Instrumental in securing the Civil Rights Managers were graded higher and in the same pay grade as the HR Managers after the proper assessment.

Minority Students Participation

She revamped VDOT'S core development program to include a business administration track and State Transportation Internship Program, a program designed to help introduce minority students to find careers in the transportation industry.

2022 VDOT Virtual DBE Symposium Award Winners

ROD BUSTERS, INC



DBE Contractor of the Year Rod Busters, Inc.

Rod Busters, Inc. has been selected as DBE Contractor of the Year. This award recognizes the contractor that has developed a positive reputation in the industry for professionalism, shown integrity in work standards and performance, exhibited a commitment to business development, and upheld the spirit and principles of the DBE program.



DBE Consultant of the Year Quinn Consulting Services, Inc.

Quinn Consulting Services, Inc. has been selected as DBE Consultant of the Year. This award recognizes the consultant that has developed a positive reputation in the industry for professionalism, shown integrity in work standards and performance, exhibited a commitment to business development, and upheld the spirit and principles of the DBE program.



DBE Transportation of Materials of the Year E Contracting Services

E Contracting Services has been selected as DBE Transportation of Materials of the Year. This award recognizes the firm that is a respected and responsible leader that has provided outstanding, efficient, timely service in serving the transportation industry on VDOT contracts.



Nasir & Associates, LLC Engineered Construction Products

DBE Supplier Firm of the Year Nasir & Associates, LLC

Nasir and Associates, LLC has been selected as DBE Supplier Firm of the Year. This award recognizes firms that have demonstrated a high level of professional service in regard to efficiency and timeliness in providing materials/products on VDOT contracts.

2022 VDOT Virtual DBE Symposium Award Winners



DBE Safety Record of the Year Ashburn Contracting Corporation

Ashburn Contracting Corporation has been selected as DBE Safety Record of the Year. This award recognizes an outstanding DBE firm with a record of commendable safety performance over the past three (3) years based on statistical safety performance data.



Prime Consultant of the Year WSP USA

WSP USA has been selected as Prime Consultant of the Year. This award recognizes firms that excelled in upholding the requirements of the federal DBE Program and has a demonstrated track record of partnering with, utilizing, and forming strategic alliances with DBE firms to participate on VDOT contracts through the awarding of subcontracts to DBE firms.