

Minority & Small Business News

DBE goal methodology set for upcoming 3 years



S.C. Secretary of Transportation Christy A. Hall addresses participants at the General Session of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Consultation Meetings regarding Title 49 §26.45 of the Code of Federal Regulations in Columbia on Feb. 12, 2021. Business Development Center Director Anthony Cromartie looks on after opening the first of three sessions held in Columbia, North Charleston and Spartanburg in February 2021.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), Division of Minority and Small Business Affairs (MSBA), held its Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Consultation Meetings regarding 49 Code of Federal Register (CFR) §26.45. This code determines how the overall DBE goals are set for the upcoming three years. SCDOT held public consultation meetings in Columbia, North Charleston and Spartanburg. SCDOT launched a website to market and accept registrations electronically and reached out to a variety of media vendors throughout the state to obtain public service advertisement for the events.

More than 1,000 meeting notifications were disseminated to DBE firms and other interested stakeholders. The invitees included the current listings of all firms on the South Carolina Unified Certification Program (UCP) Directory, SCDOT's Pre-qualified contractors and SCDOT's consultants. Additionally, SCDOT invited UCP partners, for example, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Council of Governments (COGs) and transit provid-

ers. Invitations also included various minority and women's business organizations, professional organizations and business development centers. They were invited to provide feedback on the goal-setting process. Invitations were also extended to members of the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus, the Governor's Office - South Carolina Division of Small and Minority Business Contracting and Certification, National Action Network, SCDOT's Commissioners and local Federal Highway Administration representatives.

SCDOT conducted all three consultation meetings jointly with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Two DBE certified firms were contracted to serve as facilitators. DESA, Inc. was selected to conduct the highway breakout session and capture comments made during both the general session and highway breakout. S2 Engineering and Consulting, LLC was selected to conduct the transit breakout session and capture comments made during the transit breakout session.

Each meeting consisted of a general session followed by concurrent breakout sessions, one for highway and one for transit. At the conclusion of each meeting, participants were encouraged to complete and return comment cards to capture additional public input. Approximately 150 individuals attended the three meetings with a total of 57 DBE firms represented. These meetings and comments from the public were used as the justification in determining SCDOT DBE goals for the next three years.

SCDOT evaluated the public consultations to determine:

- DBE firms that are ready, willing and able to bid on SCDOT projects
- DBEs' capacity to perform work
- Potential opportunities for DBE participation
- Other factors

Based upon that evaluation, the agency has established its overall DBE goal for FHWA Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2021-2023 at 12 percent each year for Federal Highway contracts. The DBE goal for the transit program is set at 4 percent.

Gas tax increase has increased DBE goals, training, certifications

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and the Division of Minority Small Business Affairs (MSBA) have been able to accomplish several goals following the increase of our SC gas tax from 16 cents to 28 cents. In a recent report, SCDOT boasts that construction work has tripled and construction, engineering, and inspection (CE&I) work has quadrupled.

Therefore, over the last 18 months, SCDOT has been able to use the allotted funds to accomplish several Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) goals. First, in order to meet the growing CE&I need, SCDOT moved their focus into providing professional DBE firms with technical training and certifications.

The agency has also appointed a new Director of DBE Mega Project Support, Compliance, and Technical Assistance to serve as a point-of-contact for current and upcoming mega projects. **Gary Linn** now leads the goal setting process, identifies potential set-

aside work, oversees the outreach events, and facilitates the Good Faith Effort review if necessary.

To further demonstrate support for the DBE community from senior leadership and provide an opportunity for DBE firms to speak to senior leadership, SCDOT's MSBA division organized a "Bridging the Gap" forum.

The forum included presentations from Secretary **Christy A. Hall**, Deputy Secretary for Engineering **Leland Colvin**, Deputy Director of Finance **Justin Powell**, Director of Pre-Construction **John Boylston**, and the Director of Construction **Robbie Isgett**.

The forum resulted in the following: six professional service DBE firms were invited to have one-on-one presentations to senior leadership similar to what is afforded to large prime contractors; a potential plan holders' list was developed to help give more opportunities to DBE firms, and a new quote policy was formed named the "MBE Quote Policy".

This policy requires all SCDOT personnel to secure three quotes for \$10 - \$25K commodities and services contracts and at least one of the three must be from a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE).

On the national level, SCDOT's Division Director of Minority and Small Business Affairs **Greg Davis** currently serves as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Committee on Civil Rights Chairman.

Under Davis' leadership, a letter was written to the AASHTO Board recommending courses of action that would result in the development of a more diverse, well-rounded and sustainable workforce, as well as the creation of systems and promotion of programs, policies and initiatives that would lead to short-term, long-term and recurring benefits to disenfranchised groups.

Some of the recommended courses of action included diversifying leadership roles and management, an enhancement in cross-disciplinary education and training of

Civil Rights aspects at regional and local levels, and to provide opportunities for DBE contractors to engage DOT leadership in a manner consistent with the opportunities afforded to organizations such as Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) and other industry partners.

The board accepted the recommendations and ultimately adopted a policy resolution regarding strategies to address race, equity, diversity and inclusion in all state DOTs.

Secretary Hall also recently spoke on a national panel at AASHTO's virtual spring meeting to share what the SCDOT team has done concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) and shared the results of those efforts.

For more information on how to work with our Division of Minority and Small Business Affairs office, please visit our website at <https://www.scdot.org/business/bus-development-overview.aspx>.