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Catrina's Corner

Catrina Blair Small Business Advocate



Busy with Construction, Contracts, Community Meetings and More

February is the month for love. Love of family, friends and significant others, love of Black history and love for work.

Yes, work. Most people who work on the high-speed rail project know what I'm talking about. We are extremely busy right now working on a number of areas, including the **Track & Systems contract**. The release of the Request for Proposal in December marked the first time in almost four years that the Authority released a design-build contract. This one also has a maintenance component.

The 30-year contract calls for construction crews to install steel tracks, overhead electrical power lines, communication

"We're extremely busy right now working on a number of areas, including the Track and Systems contract."

Catrina Blair
Small Business Advocate
California High-Speed Rail Authority

Investing in California Small Businesses

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To view past newsletters visit:

https://hsr.ca.gov/small_business/newsletter.aspx

Catrina's Corner

Catrina Blair Small Business Advocate



systems, maintenance facilities and agree to maintaining high-speed rail structures, systems and equipment. It would cost \$1.6 billion to complete the work and begin operations on the first 119-miles of high-speed rail that's currently under construction in the Central Valley. And of course, small businesses get 30 percent of that.

The Authority is also moving forward on environmental clearances for the rest of Phase 1, the 520-mile segment of the high-speed rail project from **Merced to San Francisco** and **Bakersfield to Los Angeles/Anaheim**. The environmental impact reports/environmental impact statements (EIR/EIS) must be completed and approved under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental laws for us to get the green light for construction.

Completing the environmental process will be facilitated by the Authority because we received NEPA assignment in July 2019 from the Federal Railroad Administration. To get the job done, we must develop reams of documents for community meetings and public hearings where a number of people will answer questions and concerns from residents, property owners, elected officials and stakeholders. Community meetings began on the San Francisco Peninsula and in Gilroy last July and August. Many more gatherings are still to come near Merced and Bakersfield extending down to Anaheim.

On top of all of that, we're working on the 2020 Draft Business Plan which looks at our progress over the last two years, lays out a plan for the next two years, reviews

challenges and foreseeable risks and how to mitigate them. We're always crunching numbers, so the Business Plan will also update ridership levels and costs, including the price of operations and maintenance and revenue. The public will be able to make comments on the business plan before it is finalized.

Love is in the air during the month of February, so this newsletter features a couple that lives and works together. Ashley and Ethan Driscoll run Bancroft Construction Services, a small business conducting biological monitoring for Construction Package 4 between the Tulare-Kern County line and Bakersfield. Ashley, a Navy veteran and mother of three, is the environmental expert, while Ethan has a wealth of experience in construction.

In honor of February, which is Black History Month, and March, which is Women's History Month, we decided to highlight two African-



In January, about 80 small business owners and representatives showed up at Fresno's City Hall for the Authority's Industry Forum on the Track & Systems contract.

Small Business Program

The Authority is committed to small businesses playing a major role in building the statewide high-speed rail system. The Small Business Program has an aggressive 30 percent goal for small business participation including Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBEs) and Micro-Businesses (MBs).

American women who play major roles in the small business arena. Both are known for their sunny dispositions and tireless work.

Our Small Business Champion Spotlight showcases Tara Lynn Gray, the CEO of the Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce. Gray serves as a mentor to small business owners who want to win contracts and increase their number of employees along with profits. She has developed programs and services that help her mentees avoid pitfalls she experienced when she first started out as a business owner.

And be sure to check out our Small Business Partner Spotlight featuring Artemise Davenport, who has spent almost two decades at the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District. She runs the District's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program along with the Business Outreach Committee (BOC), a group made up of 26 transit agencies including the Authority. In her capacity at the District and the BOC, Davenport helps small business owners jump into the world of government contracting. It can be confusing, but those who meet Davenport find out her advice can lead to projects that pay some major money.

We also continue to grow our small business community. Currently, we have 539 small businesses working on the high-speed rail project. Here's to even more success for small businesses in 2020 as they hop on board high-speed rail.

Catrina Blair

1. Small Business Advocate Catrina Blair (left) and Small Business Outreach Coordinator Damon Dorn (right) talked to small business owners at the Track & Systems Industry Forum. They explained how small businesses can get involved in the contract.

2. Industry Forum participants were able to talk with the three shortlisted teams that are bidding on the newly released Track & Systems contract. The scope of work includes design, construction and testing of trackwork, railway systems and electrification. It also has a 30-year maintenance agreement.

3. Authority board member Henry R. Perea (second from right), attended the Track & Systems Industry Forum. The former Fresno County Supervisor told listeners the high-speed rail project is helping the local economy by hiring 3,200 construction workers and providing work to over 500 small businesses statewide.



Go, Meet, Greet: Small Business Events

February 11, 2020

Business Advisory Council Meeting
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Department of General Services
707 3rd Street
West Sacramento, CA 95605

February 18, 2020

California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
Sacramento, CA
Time & Location: TBD

February 20, 2020

Doing Business with the State of California and Becoming Small Business Certified
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Sonoma County Economic Development Board
141 Stony Circle, Ste. 110
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

February 21, 2020

4th Annual Procurement Workshop
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Bible Way Christian Center
2090 Oakland Road
San Jose, CA 95131

March 17, 2020

California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
Los Angeles, CA
Time & Location: TBD

April 8, 2020

Central Valley Business Diversity Expo
12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Peerless Building
1755 Broadway Street
Fresno, CA 93721

April 21, 2020

California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
Fresno, CA
Time & Location: TBD

April 30, 2020

CPUC/Joint Utilities San Diego Business Expo
7:30 AM – 1:00 PM
San Diego Scottish Rite Event Center
1895 Camino del Rio South
San Diego, CA

May 12, 2020

Business Advisory Council Meeting
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Department of General Services
707 3rd Street
West Sacramento, CA 95605



April 1, 2020

Veteran and Small Business Summit
9:30 AM – 4:00 PM
Conference and Recreation Center
14075 Frederick Street
Moreno Valley, CA 92553

The **Southwest Veteran Business Resource Center (SWVBRC)** hosts the 9th Annual Veteran and Small Business Summit. It's an opportunity for small business and job seekers to speak one-on-one with state agencies, companies and other organizations about contracts and who's hiring. Attendance is free.



April 2, 2020

Norcal Business Matchmaker
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Finley Community Conference Center
2060 W. College Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Small businesses can meet one-on-one with government agencies and large prime contractors at the Norcal Business Matchmaker. The event is hosted by Norcal Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) and Napa-Sonoma Small Business Development Center.

Small Business Newsletter Did You Know?

Countries from around the world are helping the Authority build California's high-speed rail system. The Authority has signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and strategic partnerships with 10 countries who already have high-speed rail - France, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Spain, United Kingdom, Belgium and Sweden.

The cooperative agreements allow the countries and the Authority to share information such as best practices for constructing and operating high-speed rail. The most recent MOU was signed with **Sweden** in 2017 and resulted in a Swedish delegation coming to California for three days in late 2019. The group discussed construction challenges and best practices with the Authority because Sweden is preparing to **upgrade existing high-speed rail lines and build new ones**, which will allow trains to increase speeds from 124 mph to 155 mph.



California to Las Vegas High Speed Rail:

Travelers will soon have a new fast efficient way to travel from Southern California to Las Vegas. Construction for the 186-mile high-speed rail line connecting Victorville to Las Vegas is slated to begin in late 2020 and be completed in 2023. The projected cost of the project is \$4.8 Billion. The trip will take about 90 minutes. British billionaire Richard Branson's Virgin Trains USA took over the project in 2018. The Authority has a memorandum of understanding with the project.

(Photo courtesy of Brightline)



Rapper Reps New LA Metro Line: Snoop Dogg hosted the celebration when **LA Metro reopened rail service** between downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach. The rapper recalled riding the Blue Line before he had a record deal. Now known as the A-line, it cost \$350 million to upgrade the 22-mile line, LA County's oldest light-rail service that first opened in 1990.

(Photo courtesy of LA Metro)



China Railway: Another first for China's high-speed rail system. In January, **driverless high-speed trains** began operations on a 108-mile line that took four years to build. The new line connects Beijing, Zhangjiakou and Yanqing, cities that will host events during the 2022 Winter Olympics. The smart trains zip along at 217 mph and feature sensors that detect operational abnormalities. Seats have touch-screen controls and wireless charging docks. The trains are driverless but travel with human monitors.

(Photo courtesy of ©Chine Nouvelle/Sipa/Rex)

Peacemaker Resolves High-Speed Rail Legal Squabbles

Sam Hassoun believes there are serious ailments plaguing the construction industry that result in additional costs with no added value: arbitration and litigation.

Such disputes are common in the construction industry, Hassoun said, and occur at varying points in a project. Sometimes, disputes center on differing site conditions from design drawings. Other times, problems are caused by “egos and refusal to put what’s best for the project first, and polarization of positions between contractors and owners.”

A reluctance to embrace the true spirit of partnering can also lead to an “us-versus-them mentality” when collaborating on construction projects. Frankly, Hassoun believes if disagreements don’t end amiably, they will lead to a hefty legal bill.

“When disputes happen, each party will be quick to take a hard position, file claims and appoint attorneys to resolve their disputes instead of third-party neutrals who understand the actual work and what it takes to build the project,” added Hassoun, President and CEO of **Global Leadership Alliance, Inc.** (GLA), a partnering and consulting firm. “It takes an average of an additional two to three years sometimes to settle all the claims.

“If we don’t settle them, we have to go to court. And that’s an additional 20 percent or so of the project budget that nobody accounted for when we went out to build those jobs. The taxpayer did not expect us to pay an extra 20 percent with zero value added. Nothing went back to the community, nothing went back to the taxpayers. So that

became a disease, an epidemic.”

Since 2001, **Hassoun and his team** of facilitators have worked with clients to avoid the costly trap of arbitration and litigation. Under Hassoun’s guidance, Sacramento-based GLA has emerged as a leader specializing in the development and implementation of collaborative dispute mitigation systems for state agencies, organizations and construction projects.

As one of 539 certified small business firms working on California high-speed rail, GLA offers customized programs in Construction Project Facilitation, Construction Partnering, Facilitated Dispute Resolution (FDR), mediation, strategic planning, executive



1. After working around the country for Bechtel Corporation, Sam Hassoun landed an engineering job at the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). He worked on dozens of bridge and road projects before launching Global Leadership Alliance (GLA) in 2001.

coaching and leadership development.

GLA’s certified neutral facilitators have worked on hundreds of projects in many countries, with a total value over more than \$40 billion.

“Preventative dispute mitigation is about dispute prevention versus dispute resolution. We get in and identify key goals for the project and what’s going to help us achieve these goals,” Hassoun offered. “And then we establish what we call the dispute prevention and resolution process. In the event a dispute doesn’t get resolved in the field, it can quickly be elevated because it has to get resolved. We sit down and we work with all the parties

“Preventative dispute mitigation is about dispute prevention versus dispute resolution. We get in and identify key goals for the project and what’s going to help us achieve these goals.”

Sam Hassoun
President/CEO
Global Leadership Alliance, Inc.

on the resolution process.”

GLA has provided its dispute mitigation expertise for the California High-Speed Rail Authority since 2015, working with **Dragados-Flatiron Joint Venture (DFJV)** on CP 2-3 and **California Rail Builders, LLC** on CP-4. Both project sections are in the Central Valley.

“Our services are designed to bring together the Authority, their project management firms and all the subcontractors and contractors to keep them focused on the common goal,” Hassoun said. “The common goal is to safely construct the section for that project and overcome the challenges that keep the project on schedule and within budget, while maintaining the quality expected by the end user.

“We are also helping the Authority to work with other sister agencies. High-speed rail is going to cut across land, air, environment and utilities. A lot of existing structure has to move out of the way for that to go through and that is not easy.”

Having worked as a civil engineer for over 30 years is key to the success of GLA and its continued growth along with Hassoun’s ability to relate to both sides of a dispute. “I speak both languages – the language of the contractor and the language of the owner,” said Hassoun. “My client is not the owner and it’s not the contractor. It’s the project.”

Ricci Graham

1. & 2. In 1989, Sam Hassoun worked on the repair of the Bay Bridge after the Loma Prieta earthquake broke a 50-foot section of the bridge. That job helped prepare him for what he does for the high-speed rail project today – settling contract disputes before they land in court.

3. Global Leadership Alliance CEO Sam Hassoun conducts partnering sessions and lectures about leadership in the construction industry. He discusses how to keep dozens of people working on large projects focused on maintaining quality while completing their work on time and within budget.



Helping High-Speed Rail Comply with Environmental Rules

Network! Follow up! Deliver! This simple process paid off for Ashley Driscoll, a no-nonsense Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise owner who wanted to get to work after launching her Oak Glen small business in February 2017.

The firm, **Bancroft Construction Services**, specializes in biological and stormwater consulting services, a critical discipline that promotes the health of the environment by ensuring construction projects take proactive measures to stay in compliance with environmental rules.

"It became very clear that in order to really get started, we would need to know somebody," said Driscoll, whose husband Ethan has joined Bancroft, bringing with him a wealth of construction industry knowledge and expertise. "This is when I started attending high-speed rail workshops and finally started gaining some traction."

Bancroft was awarded a contract with

Stantec to conduct biological monitoring for **Construction Package 4**, the section of high-speed rail from the Tulare-Kern County line to north of Bakersfield.

Having graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 2005, Driscoll is no stranger to soldiering on and going above and beyond. Prior to earning a master's degree in Community Leadership with an emphasis on sustainability, she served as a Surface Warfare Officer. The mother of three small children also made time to coach youth volleyball and compete as a member of the All Armed Forces Volleyball Team in the 2007 World Games.

With the connections made through high-speed rail and additional workshops, Driscoll said the firm was able to hire employees and "gain some validation that we were worth considering and have something to offer."

Bancroft has since gone on to provide environmental coordination for the

Skookumchuck Wind Energy Project in Washington State, which will feature more than three dozen giant wind turbines producing electricity. The firm recently started working on a project for Southern California Edison offering stormwater compliance with weekly stormwater inspections.

"Our biologists are working in the field monitoring construction activities ensuring the project remains in compliance with the incidental take permit," said Driscoll. "Additionally, our biologists are on the high-speed rail project site daily supporting the project team, conducting pre-construction surveys, sensitive species trapping and

"Our biologists are working in the field monitoring construction activities ensuring the project remains in compliance."

Ashley Driscoll
Owner
Bancroft Construction Services



Former Navy Surface Warfare Officer Ashley Driscoll (right) launched Bancroft Construction Services in 2017. Specializing in biological and stormwater consulting services she conducted a site visit at the Pond Avenue Viaduct in Construction Package 4 north of Wasco. Joining Driscoll was her husband, Ethan (left), who also works for Bancroft.

burrow excavations.”

The satisfaction of working on sustainable projects like high-speed rail may stem from Driscoll’s expertise in environmental impacts on development — and efforts communities make to mitigate those impacts. After her time in the military, she became a Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control and a Qualified Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Developer.

“I was introduced to stormwater management and decided it was a great opportunity to become part of the solution,” she said. “I feel like it is the best of both worlds, helping projects stay in compliance, which in turn helps our environment.”

For Bancroft, the future appears bright.

“We’re trying to hire more people right now,” she said. “My hope is to continue to grow so that we can provide meaningful jobs in a field that I believe is important. We also want to expand the services we provide our clients. I’m excited to see what the future holds for us!”

Micah Flores

1. David and Mason Dubois, brothers and biologists, set up a shade tent over small mammal burrow excavations near Poso Creek and the high-speed rail alignment in Kern County. They’re conducting a survey to make sure sensitive species won’t be harmed by high-speed rail construction.

2. Ethan Driscoll was working for Bancroft when he conducted a Sonoran Desert Tortoise survey and health assessment with the Arizona Game and Fish Department near Fort McDowell, Arizona. The Sonoran Desert Tortoise is listed as “threatened” under the United States Endangered Species Act.

3. Bancroft biologist Jonathan Butin was on site monitoring construction impacts on the environment and sensitive species near Poso Avenue. A Century Link (Level 3) fiber optic line for data services had to be relocated in Wasco before construction could be begin on an underpass for high-speed rail.

4. Bancroft biologist Dylan Johnston-Jordan took a break from working in the hot sun while conducting burrow excavation activities on Construction Package 4 near Poso Creek.



Small Businesses Meet Teams Bidding on Track & Systems Contract

The California High-Speed Rail Authority's latest procurement has small businesses clamoring for information. They showed up in force at an Industry Forum in Fresno to learn more to find out about the **Track and Systems contract**, the first design-build-maintain contract the Authority has ever released.

Participants received a high-speed rail project overview from Central Valley Regional Director Diana Gomez while Small Business Advocate Catrina Blair was on hand to talk about the contract's 30 percent small business goal. Chief of Rail Operations Frank Vacca explained the contract calls for the winning bidder to design, build, test and commission trackwork, railway and electrification systems. The contract also includes a 30-year maintenance agreement for infrastructure, track and systems and building and maintaining high-speed rail maintenance facilities.

Work will begin following Notices to Proceed (NTP) for several high-speed rail segments, including Construction Packages 1 through 4, stretching from Madera to Poplar Avenue north of Bakersfield. The first NTP, expected next summer, will cost an estimated \$1.65 billion. Costs for future NTPs will be developed using a schedule of values provided by qualified proposers.

The Track and Systems Request for Proposals (RFP HSR19-13) was released in December after an evaluation of Statements of Qualifications, which were submitted to the Authority in response to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that went out last July. That process generated the following **shortlist** of qualified bidders who met with small businesses at the Industry Forum.

Each Track and Systems contract proposal must meet provisions of the Authority's Small Business Program. It requires a 30 percent small business (SB) participation goal which

includes a 10 percent goal for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and a three percent goal for Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBE).

Bombardier-Salcef-Weitz Consortium

- Bombardier Transportation (Holdings)
- USA, Inc.
- Salcef, S.p.A.
- The Weitz Company, LLC
- Bombardier Transportation (Global Holding) UK Limited

California High-Speed Rail Constructors

- Fluor Enterprises, Inc.
- Balfour Beatty Infrastructure, Inc.
- AECOM
- SYSTRA
- Egis Rail

Hitachi Acciona Copasa California Rail Partners (H-A-C)

- Hitachi Rail STS USA, Inc.
- Acciona Construction USA Corp.
- S.A. de Obras y Servicios, COPASA
- Hatch Associates Consultants, Inc
- Typsa
- Colas Rail
- Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane S.p.A.
- Hitachi Rail STS S.p.A.
- Acciona Construcción, S.A.

Karen Massie



1. The three shortlisted teams bidding on the Track & Systems contract attended an Industry Forum in Fresno. They're looking for small businesses to meet a 30 percent participation goal and explained the first portion of the contract is worth about \$1.6 billion.

2. Authority Information Officer Augie Blancas talked to small business owners about the construction work that's already underway along a 119-mile high-speed rail route from Madera to Bakersfield. Currently, there are 30 heavy construction sites in the Central Valley.

High-Speed Rail Construction Tour Kicks Off Economic Summit

Authority Board Chairman Lenny Mendonca and Regional Director Diana Gomez led two dozen curious visitors on a tour of high-speed rail construction sites in the Central Valley as a kick-off to the **California Economic Summit** in Fresno.

Held last fall, the **summit** was headlined by Governor Gavin Newsom, who reiterated that he intends to double-down on the Authority's efforts in the Central Valley to extend **the initial segment of construction to Merced in the north and to Bakersfield in the south.**

In a meeting with the Fresno Bee editorial board, the Governor said completing the project in the Central Valley, where the first-in-the-nation technology can be tested, will prove to potential investors the statewide economic value of the project. He emphasized this strategy is the only path to federal and private sector funding that's needed to complete construction of Phase 1

of high-speed rail, which stretches 520 miles from San Francisco to Los Angeles/Anaheim.

The economic summit was designed to further the Governor's **Regions Rise Together Initiative**, which calls for developing a plan for inclusive, sustainable growth across California. Inland communities are where renewed growth and opportunity must take place to accommodate the 50-million people expected to live in



California by 2050.

Chairman Mendonca also serves as the Governor's Chief Economic and Business Advisor and Director of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development. He gave summit attendees an up-close look at ongoing construction of the signature project that will bring renewed growth and opportunity to the state. Gomez was on hand to answer questions about rail design, engineering and construction and pointed out high-speed rail is already spurring local economic growth. To date, the project has dispatched more than 3,200 workers to job sites, employed more than 530 small businesses, and generated nearly \$8 billion in economic output.

Elizabeth Scott

In November, Authority Board Chairman Lenny Mendonca (right), and Central Valley Regional Director Diana Gomez (left) led two dozen people on a tour of high-speed rail construction sites in Fresno. Visitors learned high-speed rail has hired over 3,200 construction workers, hundreds of small businesses and poured over \$500 million into Fresno area infrastructure. The tour was part of a three-day Economic Summit in Fresno.

Authority's 2020 Business Plan



Every two years, the California High-Speed Rail Authority releases a business plan, a document that explains the way forward for our high-speed rail program. The 2020 Business Plan will give a detailed analysis of costs, funding, ridership, challenges and risks. It also shares our progress on planning for the Silicon Valley to Central Valley line and for environmental review for all of Phase 1 which stretches from San Francisco to Los Angeles/Anaheim.

The Authority expects to release the

Draft 2020 Business Plan during the second week of February and open a 60-day public comment period that will close in April. Residents, business and property owners, elected officials and other stakeholders can go to the Authority's website at www.hsr.ca.gov to get more information about how to make comments online, by email, U.S. Mail, voicemail or by providing public comment at designated Authority Board of Directors meetings.

California High-Speed Rail Authority CEO Brian Kelly talks to staff about the upcoming 2020 Business Plan. The plan discusses costs, funding, ridership, challenges and risks for high-speed rail construction in the Central Valley, planning for the Silicon Valley to Central Valley line and for environmental review for all of Phase 1 which stretches from San Francisco to Los Angeles/Anaheim.

Workers Crank Out High-Speed Rail Construction

Sometimes it's hard to hear over the beeping and clanging sounds coming from **the Fresno Trench**, the giant passageway that will eventually carry high-speed rail under State Route 180 near downtown Fresno.

"I've been on the project for over two years," said Joseph Arrendondo, a carpenter at the trench that stretches nearly two miles. He helped build forms for concrete that will be poured for intrusion protection barrier walls that will separate high-speed rail trains from trains on Union Pacific Railroad tracks.

"It is pretty cool to be a part of something that will be a landmark," Arrendondo added. "It has produced a lot of work for everybody. Hopefully, it doesn't stop and it keeps going."

Journeyman Carpenter Eric Alcantar echoed Arrendondo's sentiments. He said, "It's a big thing to tell everybody that you work on the project." He and long-time crew members feel like they're part of a family-like team.

"We meet a lot of great people out here," he explained. "It's a lot of fun. Everybody gets along."

Not far away in North Fresno, surveyor Jose Cabaddu was on top of the **San Joaquin River Viaduct**, an imposing structure

"It is pretty cool to be a part of something that will be a landmark. It has produced a lot of work for everybody. Hopefully, it doesn't stop and it keeps going."

Joseph Arrendondo
Carpenter
The Fresno Trench

featuring arches that look like they're part of a roller coaster ride. As he peered through his surveyor's scope he said, "We check the level and everything looks good. Basically, I make sure the structure and everything is in the right place and is the right height."

1. Carpenter Joseph Arrendondo pushed aluminum framework into place for concrete forms that will be part of an intrusion barrier at the Fresno Trench.

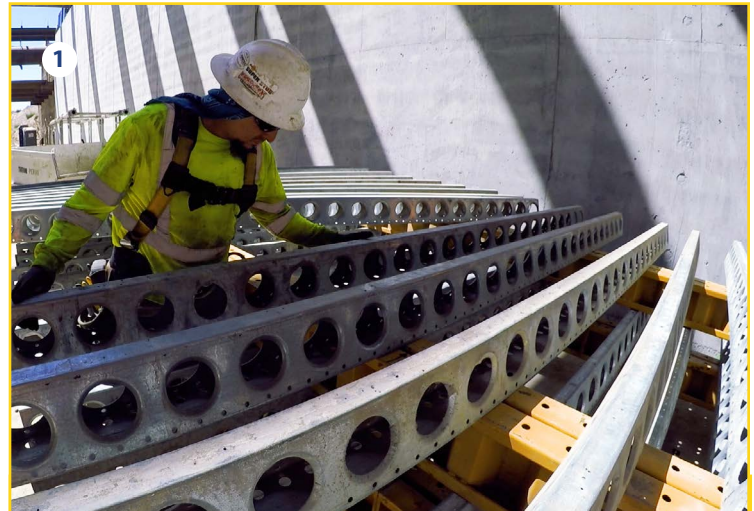
2. Journeyman carpenter Eric Alcantar said, "It's a big thing to tell everybody that you work on the [high-speed rail] project."

3. Surveyor Jose Cabaddu peered through his surveyor's scope on top of the San Joaquin River Viaduct in north Fresno. He was making sure everything on the 4,700-foot structure is the right height and in the right place.

Concrete forms and scaffolding are going up on the two archways on that part of the pergola. "This is the first high-speed rail in America," Cabaddu said. "It's a good feeling to work on a major project like this. It definitely keeps me going." He laughed as he echoed a U.S. Navy recruitment ad, "It's not just a job, it's an adventure."

Currently, more than 3,200 construction workers have been dispatched to work on high-speed rail in the Central Valley.

Karen Massie/Scott Waters



High-Speed Rail Happenings



1. A crane carried construction crews high above the deck of the San Joaquin River Viaduct in north Fresno as they prepared arches over the structure for concrete.

2. Workers placed steel rebar on the floor of the box that will carry high-speed rail trains through the Fresno Trench, which sits alongside Union Pacific lines and under State Route 180.

3. In December, Construction Package 4 design-build contractor California Rail Builders took the day to pour concrete and form the first deck of the Garces Highway Viaduct in Kern County.

4. It's been a long day in Kings County where crews were working on the Excelsior Avenue Grade Separation between 7th Avenue and State Route 43.

5. Small business owners and representatives attended the Authority's Track and Systems contract Industry Forum in Fresno. They found out getting involved in high-speed rail could mean years of work and may add millions to their bottom line.

6. Authority Board of Directors member Henry R. Perea (right) and Central Valley Regional Director Diana Gomez (left) spoke at the Industry Forum in Fresno.

7. Events put on by the Business Outreach Committee are always well attended in the San Francisco Bay Area. Small business owners know they'll be able to find out about current and upcoming transportation contracts.

8. Last November, about 75 small businesses showed up to talk one-on-one with more than a dozen government agencies and prime contractors, who staffed information tables at the Business Outreach Committee event in Oakland.

From Bridge Toll Collector to Recruiting Small Businesses for Million Dollar Contracts

Artemise Davenport will tell anyone she's had quite a ride at the **Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District**. She started at the agency as an on-call bridge officer in 2000. "I had never crossed the Golden Gate Bridge until the day I showed up for my interview," she laughed. "The day after my interview, I was hired. It was the best career decision I ever made in my young adult life!"

After working four years part-time on the bridge, Davenport took a full-time job in the maintenance department. Eight years later, she worked her way up to become the administrator of the **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise/Small Business Enterprise (DBE/SBE) Program**.

"My favorite part of the job is outreach," Davenport explained. "I love the interaction with the public and being able to assist small and disadvantaged businesses **to do business with the District.**"

Davenport lets business owners know 112,000 cars cross the bridge every day. On a monthly basis, district transit busses transport more than 250,000 passengers from Santa Rosa and Richmond to San Francisco. More than 200,000 people ferry across the

"My favorite part of the job is outreach. I love the interaction with the public and being able to assist small and disadvantaged businesses to do business with the district."

Artemise Davenport
DBE/SBE Program Administrator
Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and
Transportation District

Bay from Sausalito, Larkspur and Tiburon to San Francisco.

The district's biggest challenge is finding DBEs who can do work for the ferry division, but it also has a lot of success. According to Davenport, in the federal fiscal year 2017-18, the district awarded \$16.8 million worth of contracts, funds received from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. She added, "Districtwide we spent over \$1.9 million with DBE firms."

Davenport helps get the word out about district contracts as the volunteer administrator of the **Business Outreach Committee (BOC)**. The organization started in 2007 with six San Francisco Bay Area transit agencies who wanted to increase participation of minority and women-owned businesses in their federally funded contracts.

Today, 26 agencies belong to the BOC, including the California High-Speed Rail Authority. Instead of holding separate



1. & 2. For nearly 20 years, Artemise Davenport has worked at the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District. She started out collecting tolls on the bridge and today she's in charge of the district's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise/Small Business Enterprise (DBE/SBE) Program. Davenport said she loves helping small businesses do business with the district.

outreach events, the members host joint events, which are very well attended. “The BOC has been very beneficial to everyone, especially my district. We’re smaller than the others and probably wouldn’t get to talk to as many business owners if the larger agencies weren’t there,” Davenport said.

Davenport has been honored many times for her hard work. The district received an award from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) as a partner agency in their Calmentor program which pairs small businesses trying to navigate the state contracting system with larger, more experienced prime contractors.

Davenport still enjoys her job as much as she did when she started. “You have to have patience and an attitude of willingness to help people,” she explained. “Sometimes things move slowly when you’re pushing a qualified firm to become DBE certified. Don’t take comments personally when you get complaints from companies that don’t win awards. You have to follow through, build relationships and go the extra mile for business owners to be successful in doing business with your organization.”

Karen Massie



1. Artemise Davenport helps get the word out and organizes events for the Business Outreach Committee (BOC). Instead of having separate events, 26 agencies, including the High-Speed Rail Authority, hold joint events for small business owners interested in contract opportunities.

2. WSP, the Authority’s Rail Delivery Partner, attended the Meet the Primes event hosted by the Business Outreach Committee. They were looking for small businesses interested in joining the high-speed rail project.

3. Davenport said her job requires “patience and willingness to help people.” She said she must “follow through, build relationships and go the extra mile for business owners to be successful.”

Small Business Owner Brings Bright Light to Fresno Metro Black Chamber

Excitement shows in Tara Lynn Gray's face whenever she talks about the **Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce**. "One thing people know about me," she said. "I love what I do."

Gray became the chamber's CEO in February 2017. A month later, she hosted her first chamber event. She said, "I held a State of the State of the chamber, looking at the numbers and what the chamber was doing."

Taking the reins of the organization was no small task. Gray lives in Vallejo, nearly 200 miles from the Central Valley. Her firm, **YADARI**, provides information technology and management consulting services and is headquartered in nearby Fairfield.

"I kept thinking, how is this going to work?" Gray recalled. "I was praying about what to do and couldn't believe God kept telling me to go to Fresno." She also got her husband's okay. He reminded her about the time they

lived in Cincinnati, Ohio and he drove her to Dayton every day so she could fly to Washington D.C. to work. "It was actually cheaper to do that crazy commute than it was for us to live in D.C.," she laughed.

Currently, Gray commutes home on the weekends and her company has enough clients to keep its doors open. Meanwhile, she focuses on raising the chamber's profile and designing programs to help Black-owned small businesses. "I learned a lot when I was a board member of the California Black Chamber," she said. "I also created programs and curriculum for Small Business Development Centers in Solano County."

Gray said the Fresno chamber offers small businesses one-on-one training and technical assistance. "The first thing we do is assess your business," she explained. "We figure out where you are, where you want to go, develop a profile and focus on what's best for

"I want the chamber to be the go-to place for small businesses. My main objective is to create jobs and increase the number of Black millionaires in the Central Valley."

Tara Lynn Gray
CEO

Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce

your company.

"If certification is needed, we make sure they get it. Then we do research and make calls to find out what government agencies buy their products. We help them with contract bids and encourage them to look at emerging markets. I also want them to avoid



Metro Black Chamber CEO Tara Lynn Gray (third from right standing) attended California's Small Business Day celebration in Sacramento. As always, she was interested in getting information that helps chamber members get opportunities to bid on government contracts.

pitfalls I experienced when I launched my business.”

The training has improved the bottom line for several companies including **Imperial Electric Services**. Gray said owner Windell Pascascio, Jr. was on track to make \$1 million a year when they met. After taking the chamber’s advice, he landed a \$5 million contract to install electric vehicle (EV) chargers in the state and made \$3.5 million in a three-month period.

Gray also partners with agencies like the California High-Speed Rail Authority, which offers contracts to small businesses. That connection paid off for Pascascio. He bid on a high-speed rail contract after Gray encouraged him to attend the Authority’s Small Business Supportive Services Symposium.

Gray’s work has also helped the chamber nab \$10 million in grant funding that will be used for developing more services and increasing membership.

“I want the chamber to be the go-to place for small businesses,” she added. “My main objective is to create jobs and increase the number of Black millionaires in the Central Valley.”

Karen Massie



1. In 2019, Small Business Administration Fresno District Director Dawn Golik (3rd from right) and Department of General Services Small Business Outreach Program Manager Danetta Jackson (3rd from left) joined Fresno Metro Black Chamber CEO Tara Lynn Gray (4th from right) as she opened the Central Valley Business Diversity Expo. The gathering was the last of three meetings designed by the chamber and the State Center Community College District to find contractors who are interested in qualifying for public contracts.

2. The Fresno Metro Black Chamber’s Business Salute to Dr. Martin Luther King is billed as a luncheon that honors Dr. King’s legacy. Chamber CEO Tara Lynn Gray organized the gathering to allow small business owners to meet and network with businesses owners they may not know.

3. & 4. Last November, Fresno Metro Black Chamber CEO Tara Lynn Gray spoke at the Authority’s Small Business Supportive Services Symposium in Fresno. She encouraged her members to attend and learn how to get involved in the high-speed rail project. She said, “My main objective is to create jobs and increase the number of Black millionaires in the Central Valley.”



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CENTRAL VALLEY:

164 Certified Small Businesses

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA:

166 Certified Small Businesses

OUTSIDE OF CALIFORNIA:

16 Certified Small Businesses

