

# Creating a workforce blueprint

## *COMTO supports transportation industry minority professionals*

BY DEANN DALEY HOLCOMB

Airports, bridges, buses, highways, ports, railways and roads all play a vital role in the daily lives of the country's citizens. Thanks to a cadre of transportation professionals, people can safely reach their destinations. Among those responsible for making that happen are members of the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials, which was founded in 1971 as the nation's leading multimodal advocacy organization for minority professionals and businesses in the transportation industry.

Based in Washington, D.C., COMTO's mission is to provide opportunities in the transportation industry for minority participation and advancement through advocacy, training and professional development.

The national membership of over 9,000 includes individuals, groups, transportation agencies, private sector corporations, nonprofit organizations and historically underutilized businesses.

"Whether it is transit, aviation, light rail, our ports or airports, we want to make sure we show the best of what's happening — like making sure our state highways are being built and run on cutting-edge technology and moving people across the country," said Bradley Mims, COMTO president and CEO, a 40-year transportation industry veteran who has been a part of COMTO for 15 years.

From events like Celebrating Women

Who Move the Nation, to Careers in Transportation for Youth or CITY Internship Program and Leadership Institute, COMTO stays connected with minorities in the transportation industry.

There are 1.2 million small businesses in the transportation industry, including 1.6 million employees. In both 2014 and 2015, \$4.8 billion was awarded or committed to minority-owned firms in the transportation industry. One of the organization's four goals in its 2016-2020 strategic plan is to leverage for a diverse and inclusive workforce to achieve and exceed business and contract goals.

Mims said COMTO is also focused on attracting and retaining a tech-savvy, diversified workforce. "We are dealing with autonomous vehicles, smart-vehicle technology and smart infrastructure," he said. "So, as we look forward to the future, we want to be sure we are developing a workforce blueprint to deal with challenges that are developing down the pipeline."

According to Mims, COMTO is made up of midlevel CEOs and managers. "One of the things we do is help to promote minorities and women into the places they want to be in the industry," he said. "We want to make sure our management transportation system is on track and reflects the diversity of America."

In addition to the CITY Internship Program, the organization also has national



**Bradley Mims, president and CEO, Conference of Minority Transportation Officials**



**Carmen Garcia, president, COMTO North Texas**



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and local chapter scholarship programs.

“Our national organization and more than 40 chapters around the country came up with around \$700,000 in scholarships, and we are very proud of that,” Mims said.

“In Washington D.C. last year, the CITY Internship Program drew 22 interns sponsored by corporations and public entities,” he said. “We want to make sure that we sustain and continue to grow our industry and organization. We are on a high right now, as we look to our 50th anniversary and the future.”

Carmen Garcia, president, COMTO North

Texas, and assistant vice president, diversity/outreach, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, or DART, said she is excited about what the future holds for the national organization. In addition, she said reaching goals from a regional perspective is encouraging.

“The COMTO North Texas leadership team continues to provide quality programming and topics of interest from a multimodal perspective,” she said. “The diversity of our membership and collaborations with minority organizations within our region has made an impact on our minority business communities.” ■

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### 47TH ANNUAL COMTO NATIONAL MEETING & TRAINING CONFERENCE

**WHAT:** The event is open to transportation professionals at all career levels, government employees, manufacturers and suppliers and interested participants. It consists of four days of learning, training and networking.

**WHEN:** July 28 - Aug.1, 2018

**WHERE:** Hilton Downtown Baltimore, 401 W. Pratt St., Baltimore, MD 21201

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
<https://comto.site-ym.com/page/conferencehome>



The COMTO North Texas Chapter (above) was recently recognized as a “Chapter on the Move” by COMTO’s industry magazine “Accelerate” for its 12th Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament at the Dallas Cowboys Golf Course. The event resulted in the chapter awarding \$6,000 in scholarships to local college students who are committed to a career in transportation.