



State of Illinois  
JB Pritzker, Governor



Illinois Department of Transportation  
Omer Osman, Acting Secretary

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
Feb. 26, 2021

**CONTACT:**  
Paul Wappel 217.782.3030  
Maria Castaneda 312.447.1919

## **IDOT recognized for advancing women in transportation**

*Top honors go to Acting Secretary Osman, business and workforce diversity director*

**CHICAGO** – The Illinois Department of Transportation announced today its leadership team received top awards from the Women in Transportation Seminar Chicago, a group that promotes the development and advancement of women in transportation. Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman received the Honorable Ray LaHood Award, while Office of Business and Workforce Diversity Director Pam Simon was named Woman of the Year.

“Promoting women to the highest levels of leadership is just one of the many ways to build equity and diversity in transportation across Illinois,” Osman said. “At IDOT, we strive to foster environments where women and minorities can succeed. I am proud of these awards because they mean we are making strides to best reflect the communities we serve.”

The Honorable Ray LaHood Award recognizes men who lead by example in advancing women and minorities, ensuring they can compete for leadership positions and thrive. Appointed secretary in 2019 after 30 years at IDOT, Osman selected Black women to his top administrative spots, part of his goal of creating the most diverse leadership team in the agency’s history. Throughout his career, he has played a key role in recruiting and diversifying personnel at IDOT.

The Woman of the Year Award honors overall contributions to transportation and efforts to advance women and minorities through programs and other opportunities. Rising through the ranks in three decades at IDOT, Simon worked to create the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Mentor Protégé program, which pairs firms with socially and economically disadvantaged businesses to provide assistance that helps in participating on state projects.

“Omer Osman and Pam Simon are champions for diversity who have been key players in building a more equitable and inclusive transportation industry in Illinois,” said WTS Chicago President Katie Bell. “WTS is excited to recognize and celebrate these two industry leaders for the significant contributions they have made toward the advancement of women in transportation.”

WTS Chicago represents transit, rail, highway and aviation agencies, as well as private industry, municipalities, academics and students throughout the Chicago area. The Chicago chapter is part of WTS International, which boasts more than 8,500 members and 64 chapters, with connections to a network of 40,000 transportation professionals throughout North America and the United Kingdom.