



For Immediate Release

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EQUITY IN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT LAUNCHES TO DRIVE FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS TO HISTORICALLY UNDERUTILIZED BUSINESSES

Chicago Transit Authority, Denver International Airport, Port of Long Beach, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority First to Sign Equity Pledge

Visit: EquityInInfrastructure.org

April 26, 2022 -- The Equity in Infrastructure Project (EIP) launched today to improve public contracting practices by creating more opportunities for Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) to build generational wealth and reduce the racial wealth gap by creating more prime, joint venture and equity contracting opportunities for these firms.

Through its [Pledge](#), EIP works to secure commitments from public agencies to increase the number, size and scope of contracts going to HUBs by facilitating access and reducing barriers to compete for business.

EIP defines HUBs as including firms formally designated as DBEs, Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE), Small Business Enterprises (SBE), as well as any other business classification used locally in the United States intended to boost the participation of otherwise underutilized firms, which can vary by state, region, and municipality.

EIP was founded by Denver International Airport CEO Phillip A. Washington, former US Deputy Secretary of Transportation John D. Porcari and others in anticipation of the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and to answer President Biden's call to leverage infrastructure spending to build wealth in underserved communities. EIP receives generous support from Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs, Social Impact Fund, HNTB and The James Irvine Foundation.

EIP launches with the following First Mover signers of its Pledge:

- Chicago Transit Authority – Dorval R. Carter, Jr., President
- Denver International Airport – Phillip A. Washington, CEO
- Port of Long Beach – Mario Cordero, Executive Director
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California – Adel H. Hagekhalil, General Manager
- Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) – Leslie S. Richards, General Manager and CEO

The Pledge was finalized after the above five leaders gathered in Washington, D.C. in December 2021 alongside senior leaders from the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, including representatives from USDOT, the Environmental Protection Agency, HNTB, AECOM, The James Irvine Foundation, members of Congress and others to lay the groundwork for this initiative. While EIP is acting independently, this effort seeks to advance the spirit of President Biden’s [Justice40 Initiative](#) and his June 2021 [executive order](#) pledging to increase by 2026 the share of federal contracts that go to small and disadvantaged businesses, which new Small Business Administration (SBA) data [shows is unacceptably low](#).

Starting from the baseline of their current actions and initiatives, by December 2025, Pledge signers will work to increase the number, size and percentage of HUBs growing to prime contractors, participating in joint ventures or as equity participants.

They will work toward this effort by:

- Increasing the number, size and proportion of contracting opportunities going to HUBs;
- Increasing the number, size and proportion of contracting opportunities going to HUBs as prime contractors;
- Streamlining the administration of contracting with HUBs to centralize certification, improve payment time, and standardize transparent data collection;
- Increasing the amount and type of appropriate financing available to HUBs aiming to meet infrastructure contracts by working with private and public partners; and
- Expanding the number of signatories to this Pledge.

“Investing in our nation’s infrastructure has been my life’s work and now, through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, we have an unprecedented opportunity to upgrade our communities and transform people’s lives. To reap the true rewards of the IJJA, we must focus both on what we build and who builds it, and that’s exactly what the

Equity in Infrastructure Project does,” said **Congressman Peter DeFazio, Chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.**

“This historic infusion in infrastructure funding is much needed, but it’s important that we ensure fair and equitable distribution to underserved and disadvantaged communities and businesses. Through the Equity in Infrastructure Project, we can increase generational wealth and work to correct for the underinvestment that has resulted in diminished opportunities for economic growth in low-income communities and communities of color.” said **Denver International Airport CEO and EIP Chair and Co-Founder Phillip A. Washington.**

“At CTA, we understand that every dollar we spend, every investment we make and every decision we execute impacts our customers and the communities we serve,” said **Chicago Transit Authority President Dorval R. Carter, Jr.** “It’s important that we all govern ourselves accordingly when providing job and contracting opportunities, to ensure an equitable process.”

“The Port of Long Beach is committed to equity and inclusion,” said **Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero.** “Our mission in part is to provide economic opportunities to the people of this region and beyond. That’s why we’re among the first organizations in the US to join the Equity in Infrastructure Pledge. Through the Pledge, we stand together with partner agencies to ensure that all qualified individuals and companies have their chance to join us in our work.”

“To bring greater economic equality to our communities we must remove the structural inequities that have made it difficult for small and minority-owned businesses to compete. That is our commitment today,” said **Metropolitan Water District General Manager Adel H. Hagekhalil.**

“Water delivery is a critical component of the nation’s infrastructure,” said **Metropolitan Water District Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray.** “Being more inclusive of diverse businesses will spur economic growth in our communities and spark the innovative spirit needed to ensure a resilient water supply for our region.”

“Who we contract with has always mattered in our efforts to advance equity. At this moment, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create generational wealth for small, minority and women-owned firms in the infrastructure space,” said **SEPTA General Manager and CEO Leslie S. Richards.** “SEPTA is not only committed, we’re excited to take this Pledge.”

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Learn more about the EIP Pledge at EquityInInfrastructure.org.

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