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Contact: Kim Riddle
Tel.: (202) 366-5128

U.S. Transportation Secretary LaHood Signs Memorandum of Cooperation to Encourage Women to Pursue Math and Science Careers in Transportation
Partnership with Women's Transportation Seminar International Supports Diverse 21st Century Workforce

To help counter an anticipated shortage of skilled transportation workers, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today signed an agreement with the Women's Transportation Seminar International to encourage women to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees in science, technology, engineering and math – while pursuing careers in transportation.

“There's tremendous opportunity out there for women interested in transportation-related careers,” said Secretary LaHood. “We need to do more to prepare, train and educate young women about the possibilities that await them.”

Secretary LaHood said the need for environmental engineers and technicians is expected to rise by 30 percent over the next decade. The Department of Labor reported in 2008 that less than 6 percent of employed women worked in transportation, and only 10 percent of all civil engineers in the U.S. are women. The joint initiative will support the advancement of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) through a strategic partnership between the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Women's Transportation Seminar International (WTS).

“WTS is excited to launch this strategic partnership with DOT and to help develop a transportation workforce of the future” said Elaine Dezenski, WTS International President. “Through this effort, we will work with government and industry to attract and prepare more girls and women for careers in transportation. Our goal is to help create a 21st century workforce to support a transportation network and infrastructure needed in the 21st century.

Utilizing its network of 45 chapters and over 4,000 transportation professionals, WTS will work with the DOT to organize a series of outreach sessions in 2010 and 2011 throughout the U.S. Sessions will focus on workforce development as it relates to STEM, with specific attention given to attracting and retaining a highly qualified, diverse and technically advanced workforce for the future.

The Memorandum of Cooperation signed today supports the following key goals:

- understanding where gaps exist in the attraction and retention of women in transportation-oriented technical fields such as engineering and logistics;
- developing a tool-kit of best practices in the areas of mentoring, promoting women entrepreneurs and attracting students in technical fields into transportation;
- developing more effective professional development opportunities for women across the lifecycle of a career;

- developing ideas and partnerships to encourage girls (13-18 years) to consider careers in transportation; and
- engaging the WTS community in a broad-based policy initiative that supports the advancement of women in U.S. transportation.

The initiative supports both the DOT strategic plan and its goal to achieve organizational excellence in workforce development and the WTS mission to transform transportation through the advancement of women.

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