



Bobby Forch— expanding his horizons to help others

Bobby Forch became an integral member of the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program in 2014. Thanks to his outreach and advocacy, WSDOT and the SR 99 Tunnel design-build contractor exceeded its 8% Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation goal, reaching 9.6%. Mr. Forch helped 113 DBE firms receive more than \$115 million worth of work.

WSDOT expanded Mr. Forch's role to include all its megaprograms (projects valued at more than \$1 billion). "The federal government felt our best-practices on the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program were strong and suggested we apply them to all the state's megaprograms," said Forch. "Historically, there have been barriers of entry for small businesses owned by women and people of color. Our practices make sure everyone gets a fair chance to compete for millions of dollars in WSDOT contracts."

One key to success is starting on the ground floor of a project. "I develop Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and contract language," said Forch. "After a contract is awarded, I help contractors connect with certified DBE/MSVWBE subcontractors. I continue to work with the contractor throughout the project, helping them meet the goals of the contract."

Bobby Forch's new title fills up a business card—DBE/MSVWBE Compliance & Inclusion Administrator for WSDOT Megaprograms. But the heart of what he does remains simple—connecting minority, disadvantaged and veteran-owned businesses to good opportunities.

Bobby Forch has been a champion for diversity and inclusion for more than three decades, including work for the Seattle Department of Transportation for more than 20 years. In 2019, he received the Tabor 100 Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Crystal Eagle Award for his work to create partnerships and foster economic and social opportunity for disadvantaged businesses. Tabor 100 is an association committed to increasing business and social equity and educational excellence. The Crystal Eagle symbolizes strength and vision and represents Tabor's highest honor.

Number of MSVWBE and DBE firms for each Megaprogram

All programs are working to meet their voluntary and mandatory goals for MSVWBE and DBE participation. The chart at right shows the total number of current and past MSVWBE and DBE firms currently contracted on each program. Please refer to the individual program reports for more information about MSVWBE and DBE participation.

I-405/SR 167 Program

26 A&E
48 Construction **74**

SR 520 Program

25 A&E
95 Construction **119**

AWV Replacement Program

41 A&E
171 Construction **212**

Puget Sound Gateway Program

48 A&E **48**

For More Information

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Megaprograms Diversity and Inclusive Contracting Quarterly Report: October–December 2019

Calling all veteran-owned businesses: WSDOT wants YOU!

The Washington State Department of Transportation wants to make sure everyone knows that hiring more veteran-owned businesses is a high priority. While state law requires that 3% of all state-funded contracts go to certified veteran-owned businesses, WSDOT's goal is higher—to give 5% of its contracts to veteran-owned firms.

"In my thirty-plus years at WSDOT, we haven't focused enough on attracting veteran-owned businesses to work with us," says Julie Meredith, WSDOT's Deputy Assistant Secretary of WSDOT's Megaprograms. "We want to do a better job of reaching out to new businesses as well as help veteran-owned firms already working with WSDOT better understand the benefits of getting certified as a veteran-owned businesses," said Meredith.

Statewide, less than 2% of state-funded business goes to veteran-owned firms. However, State Office of Equal Opportunity Director Earl Key believes the current numbers may not reflect the reality. "We don't necessarily know which businesses are already owned by veterans," says Key. "We know there are uncertified veteran owned firms working on WSDOT projects who we should count toward that participation goal. We want to show them the benefits of being certified so we can count their numbers in what we report."

"In the past, we don't know that veterans have seen any benefit to be certified and we would like to change that perception," Key said.

It's easy to start the certification process. All a business owner has to do is go to the Washington Electronic Business Solution site—WEBS. Once you check the box stating you're a veteran, an email will automatically be sent with instructions on next steps to certification. The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs will ask for proof of veteran status and request basic business ownership documents. That's it.

Both Julie Meredith and Earl Key believe there are a number of advantages to hiring veteran-run firms and point to organizational skills, discipline and out-of-the-box thinking as a few. "It's in everyone's best interest to hire veterans," said Meredith.

"For their service I think it is appropriate that we honor and recognize our vets for what they have provided for us and it's a great opportunity for us to utilize their skills and thank them," said Earl Key. "Considering what they have given," added Key, "It is the right thing to do."

Whether you are starting a business or already in a business, getting certified gives you a competitive edge and makes your business more marketable. WSDOT's prime contractors all know about the 5% goal for veteran-owned business. In a short, contractors are looking for people like you.



I-405/SR 167 Corridor Program

The I-405/SR 167 Corridor Program consists of a series of long-term improvements guided by the I-405 Master Plan and SR 167 Corridor Plan. For two decades, WSDOT has worked with cities, counties, federal agencies, transit agencies and community groups to develop consensus on a long-term vision for the multimodal redevelopment of this highway. The Master Plan incorporates more than 150 individual but coordinated projects between SR 512 in Auburn and I-5 in Lynnwood. Total funding for the program is \$2.8 billion.

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SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program

The SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program is enhancing public safety and mobility by replacing the highway's aging, vulnerable bridges and making significant transit and roadway improvements throughout the corridor. Planned improvements extend from I-5 in Seattle to I-405 in Bellevue, at a total budget of \$4.51 billion. The Program is focused on completing the remaining SR 520 improvements from Lake Washington to I-5. Construction of the first stage, the Montlake Project, began in spring 2019.

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SR 99 Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program

The SR 99 Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program is wrapping up demolition of the aged, seismically vulnerable elevated viaduct. Decommissioning of the Battery Street Tunnel is underway. At the north end, the Program is rebuilding streets to reconnect neighborhoods separated by SR 99 since the 1950s. After demolition of the viaduct is complete, the City of Seattle will rebuild Alaskan Way, scope that is partially funded by the AWWV Program. Total program funding is \$3.3 billion.

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Puget Sound Gateway Program

The Puget Sound Gateway Program is composed of the SR 167 Project in Pierce County and the SR 509 Project in King County. Both projects provide essential connections to the ports of Tacoma and Seattle and will help ensure people and goods move more reliably through the region. Total funding is \$1.88 billion. The SR 167 Stage 1a design-build team is working on final design and expects to begin construction on the 70th Avenue East bridge in early 2020. The procurement process for the SR 509 Stage 1b contract is underway and construction starts in late 2020.

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Megaprograms Outlook

WE ARE HERE

■ PE ■ WSDOT CN ◆ RFP/AD ◆ Bid Opening Affected by pause, as of November 7, 2019
■ ROW ■ Other CN ◆ Open to Traffic

