

Congress **MUST** Reauthorize DBE Program in 2026



Background

Congress enacted DOT's DBE program in 1983 and reauthorized it in each subsequent surface and aviation authorization. The DBE program has created opportunities where none previously existed. The core intent is to:

- Remove barriers to the participation of DBEs in DOT-assisted contracts.
- Promote the use of DBEs in federally assisted contracts and procurement activities.
- Ensure that only firms fully meeting the eligibility standards are permitted to participate.

Transportation Funding

Minnesota Surface Transportation Reauthorization is critical. As contractors and business owners, it is imperative that we have projects to keep our team employed and put food on their table.

We ask for increased transportation funding levels, mechanisms to stabilize the highway trust fund, and streamlined project delivery including reducing red tape and redundant requirements.

OUR ASK

The DBE program must be re-authorized in the federal surface transportation bill in 2026.

The DBE program must continue to be administered by the USDOT.

Certification for DBEs must utilize the ownership structure and requirements of 49 CFR Part 26, irrespective of whether they pertain to race or gender presumptions.

We advocate for a clear measure for certification, based on business size standards.

We propose a tiered approach to DBE goals based on NAICS codes. The first tier sets a standard DBE goal at the SBA size standard threshold, while a second, emerging DBE goal targets smaller businesses at 50% of the SBA size standard.

Without DBE contracting goals, small businesses are not utilized on federally funded transportation.

Following a recent court injunction, some projects had to eliminate their DBE goals. As a result, no subcontracting has been awarded to DBEs on these projects. This lack of utilization has taken millions of dollars away from the small business community.

Supporting Small Business is **VITAL**

Small businesses employ nearly **half** of the US workforce & represent 43% of the GDP.

Construction is the **3rd largest industry** for employment in the U.S.

Small businesses in construction account for **71.4%** of the total wages paid.



BARB LAU

Executive Director
Association of Women Contractors

Association of Women Contractors (AWC) is a Minnesota construction trade association representing 200 businesses working on some of the largest commercial, residential, & transportation projects in the state.

awcmn@awcmn.org | 651.489.2221 | awcmn.org