TRANSIT LEADER MICHAEL S. TOWNES RECEIVES
2010 SHARON D. BANKS AWARD

Michael S. Townes, President and CEO of Hampton Roads Transit, Hampton, Virginia, is the 2010 recipient of the Sharon D. Banks Award for Innovative Leadership in Transportation.

This Transportation Research Board (TRB) award, which may be conferred biennially, was established in memory of Sharon Banks, who was the General Manager of AC Transit, Oakland, California, from 1991 until her death in 1999. She served as the Chairwoman of the TRB Executive Committee in 1998. Townes will receive the award on January 13, 2010, during the Chairman’s Luncheon at the TRB 89th Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

The Sharon D. Banks Award recognizes innovative and successful leadership in people-oriented initiatives in transportation, sustained over an extended period of time, that exemplify Banks’ ideals of humanity and service. The award goes beyond general managerial excellence, focusing on accomplishments in areas such as the education, training, and mentoring of transportation professionals; community-sensitive facilities and services; or comparable people-oriented initiatives. Contributors to the award included the Research and Special Programs Administration (now the Research and Innovative Technology Administration) and the Maritime Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation, AC Transit, the American Public

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Transportation Association, the California Transit Association, the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials, and TRB. Recipients are chosen by a selection committee appointed by the Chairman of the TRB Executive Committee.

Townes is cited for “his service-oriented approach to addressing the mobility needs of people throughout the community, no matter what their economic or social background.” He is also recognized for his strong commitment to internal and external customer service, his contributions to the development of future transit professionals, and his persistent effort in promoting diversity and minority advancement.

Townes has had a distinguished 30-year career in the management of public transportation systems. He served as Executive Director of the Peninsula Transportation District Commission (PENTRAN) from 1989 to 1999; in 1999 he became Executive Director of Hampton Roads Transit, the organization that resulted from the merger of PENTRAN and Tidewater Regional Transit. In 2002 he became the first President and CEO of Hampton Roads Transit.

Active in TRB for 20 years, Townes chaired the TRB Executive Committee in 2004 and has served as chair or member of a variety of policy study committees and Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) project panels. He chaired the Transit Research Analysis Committee and the Committee for the National Transit Database Study: A Review. Townes is a past chair of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Executive Committee, and he chaired the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection Committee from 1996 to 1998. He also has served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Norman Mineta Transportation Institute and as Chair of the Legislative Committees for APTA and for the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials.

More than 10,000 policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of government, industry, and academic institutions are expected to attend the Transportation Research Board (TRB) 89th Annual Meeting, in Washington, DC, January 10-14, 2010. The meeting, held at the Marriott Wardman Park, Omni Shoreham, and Hilton Washington hotels, includes more than 3,000 presentations in 600 sessions and workshops covering all aspects of transportation.

The mission of the Transportation Research Board is to provide leadership in transportation innovation and progress through research and information exchange, conducted within a setting that is objective, interdisciplinary, and multimodal. TRB facilitates the sharing of information on transportation practice and policy by researchers and practitioners; stimulates research and offers research management services that promote technical excellence; provides expert advice on transportation policy and programs; and disseminates research results broadly and encourages their implementation. A major focal point of TRB's activities, the Annual Meeting provides an opportunity for transportation professionals from all over the world to exchange information of common interest.

Organized in 1920, TRB is a division of the National Academies, which include the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine, and National Research Council. The nation turns to the National Academies for independent, objective advice on issues that affect people's lives worldwide.

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