Women in Transportation
Washington, DC Chapter

"Keeping members and friends informed of events, membership, and transportation news."

Communications Plan

WTS

Advancing Women in Transportation
Washington, DC Chapter

Prepared by:
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2013

Questions, comments, and suggested improvements related to this document are encouraged. Inquiries, information, and requests for additional copies should be submitted to:

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Please title your email "Communications Plan"

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1. **Purpose**

   The Washington, DC Chapter of Women in Transportation International (WTS) aims to further the WTS mission of transforming the transportation industry through the advancement of women. WTS functions in the spirit of community, inclusiveness, and mutual support, all of which necessitate transparent communications. The purpose of this Communications Plan (the plan) is to provide a framework for relaying chapter events, membership snapshots, and transportation news to the members and friends of WTS-DC, as well as for soliciting sponsors to support the mission and activities of WTS-DC.

2. **Overview**

   The plan will provide a structure for tracking and retrieving information associated with audience reach, support the information needs of key WTS-DC decision-makers, facilitate coordination and workflow among committee chairs and board members, and provide framework for sponsorship solicitations.

3. **Scope (to whom this communications plan applies, what it does and does not include)**

   The plan describes the performance reporting requirements, information flows, tools and technologies, roles and responsibilities for the WTS-DC board, committee chairs, and any interested stakeholders or sponsors. The plan may remain relevant for up to five years, but it should be revised from year to year as the WTS-DC leadership turns over.

4. **Background**

   WTS-DC held a strategic planning session in January 2013 in which members identified and prioritized goals for the chapter as a whole and for each of the committees. By early February the Communications and Newsletter committees had met again and compiled the following list of goals for 2013:

5. **Goals and Objectives of the Communications and Newsletter Committees**
   1) Write a communications plan for the year involving the use of social media and the newsletter.
   2) Learn more about the readership of the DC Chapter Newsletter and e-blasts through analytics of Facebook page (Google Analytics), Twitter (Tweet Stats, Tweet Deck), and Constant Contact statistics.

   The following goals apply specifically to the Newsletter Committee:
   3) Use the quarterly newsletter to promote recent and upcoming activities that may be of interest to potential members; keep current members informed of membership and transportation policy news.

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4) Include "standing content" in the newsletter each quarter:
   a) Corporate Sponsors Acknowledgment
      i) List the logos of corporate sponsors on the inside cover of the newsletter
      ii) Highlight one corporate sponsor with a one or two paragraph article
      iii) Outline accomplishments and generosity of event sponsors within the Recent Event articles
   b) Message from the President – an inspiring summary of recent chapter events, upcoming programs, and how chapter activities further the mission of promoting women in transportation
   c) Upcoming Events – a list of the titles and dates of upcoming events. This section also contains one event announcement including a description and registration link
   d) Announcements – text boxes that provide opportunities for members to take action on WTS matters; for example, to vote on WTS leadership or nominate award recipients
   e) Member Spotlight
      i) List new and/or renewing members and their affiliation; include the chapter's total member count
      ii) Include the name and email of the current Membership Committee Chair
      iii) Write a Question and Answer formatted article highlighting the career of one WTS member, rotating the focus each quarter between the following suggestions:
         (1) Entry, mid or executive level
         (2) Public, private, or non-profit affiliation
         (3) Different specialty areas – engineering, planning, environmental, finance, operations, maintenance, management, etc.,
         (4) Member news – job changes/promotions/anniversaries; passing exams for PE, AICP, AIA; personal events like weddings, births
   f) Project Corner – an article on a transportation project in the DC area
      i) Focus on highway, transit, rail, maritime, or a multi-modal project
      ii) Focus on different aspects of the project – planning, environmental, finance, construction, operations, maintenance, etc.,
   g) WTS-DC Executive Board/Committee Chairs

      i)   List their organization and titles. Link to their online headshots and bios. These are hosted on Constant Contact in 2013 in PDF format.

5) Publishing the newsletter on a regular, quarterly schedule:
   a) Spring Edition – publication date March 15; articles due February 28
   b) Summer edition – publication date June 14; articles due May 31
   c) Fall edition – publication date September 13; articles due August 30
   d) Winter edition – publication date December 13; articles due November 29

6) Use Google Drive spreadsheets to brainstorm collaboratively and track progress of content for the newsletter

7) Add more interactivity in the newsletter using Adobe Creative Suite software

6. Concept of Operations

The WTS-DC Communications Committee has established a three-pronged approach to implementing communications that will positively convey the value and benefits of membership and sponsorship. The three communications initiatives are:

a) <u>Progress Reporting (Internal Communications):</u> The progress reporting efforts of the plan are designed to inform the WTS-DC Board and Committee Chairs on the reach of e-blasts and newsletter publications and explain correlations between open rates, click rates, and registration rates.

    i)   Justifies to members the cost of the $40 monthly subscription fee for the email distribution tool (Constant Contact) and the $31.79 monthly subscription fee for the software used to design the newsletter in 2013 (Creative Cloud)

    ii)   Determines the best times for the Communications Committee to distribute e-blasts and newsletters to the readership

         (1)   Obtain real-time metrics and quarterly reports by logging in to the Constant Contact account and visiting the Reports area under the Emails tab

b) <u>Outreach (Internal and External Communications):</u> The most important initiative in the Communications Plan, the outreach efforts are designed to inform members and friends of upcoming, ongoing, and recent events, membership snapshots, and transportation news. In 2013 outreach is delivered in the form of e-blasts and newsletter blasts delivered via Constant Contact.

    i)   Galvanizes readership to participate in chapter activities either as paying attendees or volunteers

    ii)   Creates enthusiasm, comradery, and a spirit of inclusion among the WTS-DC community

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c) <u>Marketing and Awareness (External Communications)</u>: The general purpose of the marketing and awareness e-blast initiative is to assist the Sponsorship Committee in soliciting sponsors from targeted audiences defined by the Sponsorship Committee.

    i) Saves the chapter money in printing costs and is environmentally friendly

        (1) The Communications Committee presents to the Sponsorship Committee the most impressive performance report results and then offers to construct a colorful, visually pleasing e-blast constructed in collaboration with the Sponsorship Committee. Additionally or alternatively, the Sponsorship Committee may choose to write a traditional letter and/or mail existing brochures in order to promote the benefits of being a sponsor.

Tailored communications activities by initiatives category are reflected in the table below:

Communications Category	Audience	Needs/ Expectations	Communication Frequency
Progress Reporting	• WTS Board and Committee Chairs	• Information regarding the report results	• At critical decision points • Quarterly at board meetings • As requested
Outreach	• Current corporate and event sponsors • Current Members • Friends and Potential Members	• Announcements of a single upcoming event with registration link • Quarterly newsletters • Special announcements, such as a Call for Volunteers	• E-blasts are published 2 weeks prior and one week prior to an event • At critical decision points • Newsletter is published quarterly

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	• Current corporate and event sponsors • Past and potential corporate and event sponsors • Current Members • Past and Potential Members	• Explanation of benefits of sponsorship, including publicity WTS-DC can provide • Explanation of WTS-DC audience, i.e., who and how many will see their name. • Timeline for significant events	• At critical project milestones and decision points • At times determined by the Sponsorship Committee

7. **Identifying Key Segments of the Audience**
   The WTS-DC board members and chairs will collaborate in an effort to categorize the individuals of the readership according to their interests. This will allow for:
   a) The Newsletter Committee to produce content relevant to the interests of specific segments of the readership, leaving no segment neglected;
   b) The Communication Committee to target tailored messages to the appropriate segments of the readership.

   Audience categories may include:
   Policy, Research, Engineering, Planning, Finance, Environmental, Construction, Operation, Maintenance, Highways, Transit, Aviation, Maritime.

   An individual can belong to more than one category.

8. **Fundamental Messages**
   Tailored messages will be tailored to address specific segments of the audience. However, there are fundamental concepts that can be communicated to the entire readership at any given time:

   a) Advancing women in transportation is key to transforming the transportation industry
   b) WTS can shape future generations of transportation leaders
   c) WTS is committed to ethical leadership, integrity and respect for all
   d) The WTS spirit of community, inclusiveness, and mutual support is one of our greatest assets

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9. **Communications Timeline**
    a) E-blasts
        WTS-DC aims to disseminate e-blast announcements at predictable intervals. In 2013 e-blasts are to be sent four weeks and two weeks prior to an event, or as requested by the event organizers.
    b) Newsletter Distribution
        In 2013 the newsletter is distributed four times a year, every three months.

10. **Communications Tools, Roles and Responsibilities**
    The plan requires that web-based tools be used and that designated administrators manage the use of these tools. A single member may be designated the administrator over more than one tool. The following tools are being used in 2013:

    a) Dropbox – the online file storage for all WTS-DC documents and pictures. The account is free of charge.
        All Board Members and Committee Chairs are responsible for acting as administrators by uploading documents to their respective folders on the Dropbox account
    a) WTS-DC Website – the website for WTS-DC. This is a subsite of the WTS International website. This site is paid for and provided by WTS International.
        i) The WTS-DC Secretary is the administrator of the WTS-DC website. She is responsible for updating all website content and creating all new pages, including event pages

    c) WTS Events – the RSVP system that accepts card payments and PayPal payments for events and tracks registrations for events. This system is paid for and provided by WTS International.
        i) The Programs Committee Chair is responsible for setting up, tracking payments, and closing events in this system

    The following tools are used solely by the Communications and Newsletter Committees:
    d) Constant Contact – an email distribution system with tracking metrics that WTS-DC has been using since 2009 or perhaps earlier. The cost in 2013 is $40/month. Should the Communications and/or Newsletter committee utilize Constant Contact, the WTS-DC Secretary is responsible for paying the monthly bill, whether by Constant Contact's automated payment feature or by other method. Automatic monthly payments have been established for 2013.

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    i)   The Chair of the Communications Committee will designate at least one administrator for this tool. Responsibilities include:

        (1)   Maintaining the distribution lists

        (2)   Exporting performance results reports

        (3)   Crafting e-blasts for upcoming event announcements and the quarterly newsletter distribution

            Note: the Constant Contact account may be synchronized with the Twitter, Facebook, and Linked In accounts so that the event announcement is automatically posted to the Twitter account (@wtsdcchapter), the Facebook account (facebook.com/wtsdc), and the Constant Contact Administrator's own Linked In account at the time the e-blast is distributed. The auto-generated postings include a link to the Constant Contact e-blast body and a link to Constant Contact's self-promoting social media accounts. The Constant Contact administrator may choose to delete one or both of these auto-generated links and replace them with a single link that points directly to the event's registration page on the WTS-DC website.

            It is the responsibility of the administrator(s) of the Constant Contact, Twitter, Facebook, and Linked In accounts to coordinate with one another to ensure that the three social media platforms are indeed publishing event announcements.

e)   Creative Cloud (optional) – a subscription to a collection of applications for the design of complex visual media that allows for interactive features to be added to the newsletter, including the embedding of video, sounds, and 3D illustrations. The cost in 2013 is $31.79/month. Should the Communications and/or Newsletter committee utilize Creative Cloud, the member who uses the software is responsible for paying her own monthly bill and submitting invoices to the WTS-DC Secretary for reimbursement in the months that the Secretary has agreed to pay the bill.

    i)   The designated member would need to install Adobe applications on her own computer. Responsibilities would include

        (1)   Designing the newsletter in InDesign and using other Adobe applications to modify and digitize the text, features, and photographs included in the newsletter

        (2)   Hosting the final exported newsletter on a website or platform that is compatible with the format and features she included in the newsletter. In 2013 the spring, summer, and

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fall newsletters are hosted on Lindsay Brown's Wordpress blog (http://denotetoday.com)

f) Facebook – a social media platform for posting announcements about WTS events, pictures taken at recent events, comments about events, or comments about any topic that is related to WTS-DC, WTS International, or transportation. Facebook is free of charge.
  i) The Chair of the Communications Committee will designate one administrator for Facebook. Responsibilities include
    (1) Publishing at least one event announcement four weeks prior and two weeks prior to the event. The post should contain a link which leads to the event's registration page on the WTS-DC website.
    Note: the Constant Contact account may be synchronized with the Facebook account so that the event announcement is automatically posted to the Facebook account (facebook.com/wtsdc) at the time the e-blast is distributed. The auto-generated announcements include a link to the Constant Contact e-blast body and a link to Constant Contact's social media accounts. The Constant Contact administrator may choose to delete one or both of these auto-generated links and replace them with a single link that points directly to the event's registration page on the WTS-DC website.
    (2) Enforcing the WTS-DC Social Media Monitoring and Commenting Policies by reviewing all direct messages and posts on Facebook. The administrator should attempt to respond to as many messages as possible; however, she may not be able to reply to all messages that WTS-DC receives via the Facebook account. For guidance on crafting an appropriate reply, she may forward comments to the appropriate WTS-DC board member or committee chair

g) Linked In – an online platform for professionals to post resumes and discuss professional topics. WTS-DC members can discuss upcoming events on the Linked In discussion group (WTS-DC Chapter). An administrator, which Linked In currently calls a group manager, vets membership requests for this group. Members of the group are able to view other members' Linked In resumes and discussion posts. Linked In is free of charge.
  i) The Chair of the Communications Committee will designate one administrator for Linked In. Responsibilities include

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(1) Approving all requests for membership to the Linked In discussion group (WTS-DC Chapter).
Note: the Constant Contact account may be synchronized with her own Linked In account so that the event announcement is automatically posted to her own Linked In profile. She can then log into her Linked In account and share the post with the WTS-DC Chapter discussion group as long as the Linked In administrator has granted her access to the Linked In discussion group.

(2) Enforcing the WTS-DC Social Media Monitoring and Commenting Policies by reviewing all direct messages and posts on the Linked In discussion group. The administrator should attempt to respond to as many messages as possible; however, she may not be able to reply to all messages that WTS-DC receives on the Linked In discussion group. For guidance on crafting an appropriate reply, she may forward comments to the appropriate WTS-DC board member or committee chair

h) Twitter – a social media platform for tweeting announcements consisting of 118 characters or less, which may contain a website link. (Often web links are shortened using services such as Tinyurl or Bit.ly to preserve characters.) The purpose of a tweet is to draw traffic to the WTS-DC website, communicate with our members, promote our events, and engage with relevant transportation stakeholders (organizations and individuals) across the Twitter platform. Subject matter of tweets includes: WTS events, pictures taken at recent events, comments about events, or comments about any topic that is related to WTS-DC, WTS International, or general tweets about transportation. Twitter is free of charge.

i) The Chair of the Communications Committee will designate one administrator for Twitter. Responsibilities include

(1) Publishing at least one event announcement four weeks prior and two weeks prior to the event. The post should contain a shortened link which leads to the event's registration page on the WTS-DC website
Note: the Constant Contact account may be synchronized with the Twitter account so that the event announcement is automatically posted to the Twitter account (@wtsdcchapter) at the time the e-blast is distributed. The auto-generated announcements include a link to the Constant Contact e-blast body and a link to Constant Contact's social media accounts. The Constant Contact administrator may choose

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to delete one or both of these auto-generated links and replace them with a single link that points directly to the event's registration page on the WTS-DC website

    (2)   Enforcing the WTS-DC Social Media Monitoring and Commenting Policies by reviewing all @replies, re-tweets, mentions, and direct messages on the Twitter account. The administrator should attempt to read as many relevant tweets as possible; however, they may not be able to reply to all direct messages that WTS-DC receives via the Twitter account. For guidance on crafting an appropriate reply, she may forward comments to the appropriate WTS-DC board member or committee chair

    (3)   Enforcing the Twitter rules below

<u>Twitter Rules</u>
a) Timing
The Communications Committee aims to determine the optimal time of day to tweet during the weeks preceding an event by studying social media metric reports generated by Tweet Stats, Tweet Deck, and Google Analytics. The optimal time of day will be determined by the Click-Through-Rate (CTR) shown on social media metrics reports, not by the number of retweets.
b) Hashtags
A hashtag is a word or a phrase prefixed with the symbol # to mark the topic or keyword of the tweet. For example, "#WTS-DCEVENT" would be an appropriate hashtag to indicate that a WTS-DC event is the topic of that tweet. The Communications Committee should inform members and friends of recommended hashtags in the weeks preceding an event and state that anyone is welcome to tweet the hashtags to help publicize the event. The recommended hashtags should be relayed to members and friends via social media, notices in e-blast messages, and the WTS-DC website.
c) Live Tweeting Notice in E-Blasts
The Communications Committee should include a notice in event announcement e-blasts on whether or not the event is off-the-record. If tweeting is permitted, the notice should include recommended topics and hastags.
d) Origination of Tweets
Tweeting may originate from the @wtsdcchapter handle or from other Twitter handles, preferably ones with transportation-oriented handles.
e) <u>WTS-DC Usage of Twitter</u>

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i) The usage statement below may be posted on the WTS-DC website:
WTS-DC will follow individuals and organizations that dedicate their sites to information about transportation. Being followed, re-tweeted, or mentioned by WTS-DC does not imply endorsement of any kind. The opinions expressed in items re-tweeted on WTS-DC's Twitter page are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of WTS-DC or WTS International.

ii) The truncated usage statement below is posted on the WTS-DC Twitter account:
Being followed, re-tweeted, or mentioned by WTS-DC does not imply endorsement of any kind.

Social Media Monitoring and Commenting Policies

a) <u>WTS-DC Social Media Monitoring</u>
The administrators of the WTS-DC social media accounts are responsible for reviewing all @replies, direct messages, and posts on the social media channels. Administrators should attempt to respond to as many messages as possible; however, they may not be able to reply to all messages that WTS-DC receives via social media channels. For guidance on crafting an appropriate reply, they may forward comments to the appropriate WTS-DC board member or committee chair.

b) <u>WTS-DC Social Media Commenting Policy</u>
WTS-DC encourages anyone to use the commenting feature on the WTS-DC Facebook, Linked In, and Google+ pages to ask questions or write comments about topics related to WTS, WTS-DC, or transportation.

Comments of an inappropriate nature that may be deleted by the WTS-DC Communications Committee include:
i) Comments including off-the-record information
ii) Inflammatory, discriminatory, threatening, or profane comments
iii) Off-topic comments that are not related to WTS or transportation
iv) Promotion of a company, product, or individual, including comments that intend to drive fans to an external link for commercial gain or spam
v) Comments left by a false profile, misleading, or created with the intent to conceal the user's identity or to falsely assume the identity of another person
vi) Comments that disclose personal identifying information about anyone, including the commenter

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11. Feedback Channels

The Communications Committee has provided the following channels for members, friends, or the public to reach the WTS board and committee chairs:
a) Direct email – the name and email addresses of the newsletter editor and membership committee chair are included in each issue of the newsletter.
b) Facebook –
   i) Wall – anyone who becomes a friend of WTS-DC may openly post a comment on the Facebook wall. These comments are not vetted first and instantly become public. The administrator is authorized to change these settings.
   ii) Message – anyone can message the WTS-DC Facebook administration by clicking on the message button on the WTS-DC Facebook page.
c) Twitter – a tweet which mentions @wtsdcchapter will appear in the @replies tab of the WTS-DC Twitter account.
d) Linked In discussion group – Approved members can make comments on the WTS-DC discussion group. A Linked In user may request to join the WTS-DC discussion group by searching for "WTS-DC," selecting "Group" on the left side menu, and clicking on the "Join Group" button.
e) Google+ – WTS-DC members are allowed to make a comment on the WTS Google+ wall.

12. Coordination for an Event Announcement E-blast – Roles and Responsibilities

Workflow for an Event Announcement E-blast
In May 2013 the WTS-DC Secretary worked with the Communications Committee to establish a workflow for the production of e-blast announcements of upcoming events. The workflow is as follows:
   b) 4 to 6 weeks before the target event date:
      c) Program originators conceptualize an event idea and present it to the Programs Committee Chair and Co-Chair. They collaborate to complete the RSVP form.

   c) 3 to 5 business days before the first e-blast is to be sent:
      i) Programs Committee Chair or Co-Chair emails the completed RSVP form, pictures, and speaker biography to the WTS-DC Secretary and the Constant Contact administrator who is responsible for crafting e-blasts.
      ii) The Secretary creates the event webpage on the WTS-DC website while the Constant Contact administrator crafts the e-blast draft.
      iii) The Secretary emails the event webpage link to the Constant Contact administrator.
      iv) The Constant Contact administrator adds to the e-blast

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(1) the link to the event webpage and
(2) the link to registration.

v) The Constant Contact administrator sends the e-blast draft to the Program originators and the Programs Committee for approval and CC's the Secretary and other designated chairs or board members. Note: These individuals comprise the 2013 E-Blast Review group in Constant Contact.

vi) The e-blast reviewers then email their suggested revisions back to the Constant Contact administrator.

vii) The Constant Contact administrator makes revisions and sends the updated e-blast draft to the e-blast reviewers again for final approval.

viii) The Program originators should email their OK back to the Constant Contact administrator.

ix) The Constant Contact administrator sends out the e-blast the next morning or at agreed upon time. Note: If no feedback is received from the e-blast reviewers within 3 business days, the Constant Contact administrator sends out the e-blast on the third day.

Event Announcement E-blast Rules
a) Schedule -
A minimum of two event announcement e-blasts should be sent in the weeks prior to an event. An e-blast should be sent four weeks and resent two weeks prior to the event.

b) Fundamental Required Elements –
The e-blast should contain
i)   a link to registration
ii) a link to the event details webpage on the WTS-DC website
iii) a link to membership registration
iv) the event sponsor's logo should be included
v)   a notice on whether or not live tweeting is permitted during the event
If live tweeting is permitted, also include:
(1) recommended hashtag(s) and topics
(2) a link to WTS-DC's Twitter Usage Statement which may be posted on the WTS-DC website. A truncated version of the WTS-DC Twitter Usage Statement is posted on WTS-DC's Twitter profile.

13. **Coordination for Sponsorship Solicitation – Roles and Responsibilities**
The specific responsibilities for the Communications Committee are as follows:
a) Approaching the Sponsorship Committee by July with Constant Contact report showing who the audience is and the open rates of recent e-blasts
b) Offering to create an e-blast to potential sponsors

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c) If offer accepted, designing the e-blast with the verbiage suggested by the Sponsorship Committee
d) Disseminating the e-blast on the agreed-upon date
e) Monitoring open and click rates

The specific responsibilities of the Sponsorship Committee are as follows:
a) Identifying potential and current sponsors who should receive the e-blast
b) Providing their email addresses if not already in the Constant Contact library
c) Developing concepts and verbiage to be used in the e-blast
d) If an organization agrees to sponsor, obtaining an up-to-date logo in both 1) eps and 2) gif or png file formats from the new or renewed sponsor. The files should be uploaded to Dropbox's Logo folder.

14. Point of Contact

Inquiries related to this Communications Plan should be directed to Lindsay Brown. Email wtsdc.rsvp@gmail.com. Please title the email "Communications Plan."

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