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Highlights from Paving the Way for Minority-Owned Businesses



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“The whole idea is to create successful businesses and successful entrepreneurs whose wealth and ability to create wealth grows with their business.” -U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg

On May 11, 2023, the Alliance for Entrepreneurial Equity hosted an event to discuss the massive opportunity for investment in minority-owned businesses through the bipartisan infrastructure law. There was a fireside chat with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Marc Morial,

President and CEO of the National Urban League, followed by a panel discussion with three female industry leaders.

Below are highlights from the speakers and panel discussion:

In his remarks, Third Way President Jon Cowan set the stage highlighting how the federal government is the largest customer in the world. Yet, Cowan noted, many women- and minority-owned businesses are missing out from participating in business with the government.

Secretary Pete Buttigieg noted size and income constraints placed on business owners hoping to enter into programs for under-resourced firms. He also foreshadowed that the Department of Transportation is considering new rules to address these barriers.

When asked about how DOT is doing in meeting its small and disadvantaged business goals, Secretary Buttigieg spoke about difficulties collecting data on where federal dollars go once they leave Washington and go to work in states and local communities.

After the conversation between Mr. Morial and Secretary Buttigieg, we transitioned to a panel discussion led by our director, Imani Augustus. During that, Teresa Lewis, Small Business Consultant at the Greater Washington Urban League and former government employee, described that access to information and capital are just a few of the barriers that small, historically excluded businesses face in the procurement system.

Tyra Redus, Acting Director at the Department of Transportation's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Businesses, highlighted the historic efforts being made to modernize the Disadvantaged Business Certification program—an essential identifier that grants access to some of DOT's unique funding and contracting opportunities.

Andrea Jackson, Deputy Compliance Officer for the District Department of Transportation in Washington DC, closed out the panel by hoping this historic infrastructure investment will enable subcontractors to move into prime roles, but warns that it will take more supportive services to become a reality.

This is only a brief snapshot of topics addressed during the course of the event. To hear more, please view the full recording [here](#).

TOPICS

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