

**Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Plan 2025 Update
Consultation Event
Summary Report**

DBE Consultation Event
Piedmont Conference Room (virtual meeting)
October 22, 2025 (11:30 am to 12:30 pm)

Overview of DBE Consultation Event

The objective, or regulatory goal, of holding a DBE consultation event is to obtain information relevant to the goal-setting process.

Three specific areas of the goal-setting process are the focus:

1. The availability of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged businesses;
2. The effects of discrimination on opportunities for DBEs; and
3. Establishment of level playing field for the participation of DBEs

Invitation and Outreach Approach

The outreach approach was designed to reach the consulting community, with a specific focus on DBEs and those who have historically been underrepresented in transportation business opportunities.

The list of partner organizations was compiled with that objective in mind. Organizations contacted included:

- **Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS)**— social media announcement posted on their linked in page, courtesy of WTS President, Iris Ortiz.
- **COMTO** – social media announcement shared with board member, Kenyata Smiley.
- **Georgia Planning Association** – Invitation and announcement shared with GPA President, Kristen Wescott.

Additional outreach methods included:

- Invitation posted on **ARC website** and social media channel, 10/16.
- **Email invitation** sent to Transportation Planning Department Consultant List, including DBEs, (200 recipients)
 - Reviewed the GDOT DBE List, cross checked with ARC Consultant List, and ensured our DBE outreach was sent to the firms most likely to apply for ARC opportunities (additional 150 recipients).

ARC Staffing and Event Logistics

This meeting was held virtually, with ARC staff presenting and facilitating from the Piedmont Conference Room. The meeting was recorded and transcribed.

- Haley Berry, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
- John Orr, Managing Director, Transportation Planning Department
- Liz Sanford, Manager, Transportation Planning Department
- Eleanor Swensson, Senior Planner, Transportation Planning Department
- Reginald Bryant, Program/Project Administrator, Procurement Department
- John Bayalis, Chief External Affairs Officer

Additional ARC staff and DBE Program Plan Draft presenters participating on-line included:

- Kimberly King, Equal Opportunity Officer, GDOT, on-line
- Kevin Weeden, KWA Planning, on-line
- Rhea Thomas, ARC DBE Compliance Officer, on-line
- Mike Alexander, ARC Chief Operating Officer, on-line
- David Haynes, ARC, on-line

Meeting Agenda and Format

11:30 AM	Welcome and Introduction of ARC Staff (Haley Berry)
11:35 AM	Objectives of DBE Consultation Event (Haley Berry)
11:40 AM	Presentation – Overview of DBE Goal, Goal Setting, and Plan (John Orr)
11:45 AM	Introduce the format and discussion questions (Liz Sanford)
12:25 PM	Closing Comments (Haley Berry)
12:30 PM	Adjourn

Four Questions for the Public Comment

1. Is our goal realistic? How would you describe the availability of ready, willing and able DBEs to assist ARC with projected contract work? Are there challenges to teaming up with other firms?
2. In your experience as a DBE, what are the opportunities for business growth in transportation? Are they constricted in any way that you experienced as discrimination? What challenges do you face as you grow? What would you need to remain an owner of your firm as it grew?
3. Are you aware of ARC opportunities? In your opinion, is there a level playing field for DBEs that offer consulting services in transportation?
4. General questions?

Participants could sign up for a speaking time using a Microsoft Form or the “Raise Hand” function in Teams. ARC staff also provided a Public Input link where participants could submit written comments. These links were shared multiple times throughout the meeting to increase participants’ ease of access.

Summary of Presentation

1. Opening Remarks and Purpose of Consultation

- *Haley Berry* opened the meeting and explained that the goal is to collect stakeholder input to inform the current update of ARC’s DBE Program Plan Draft.
- Haley explained that the discussion was focused on three areas:
 - Availability of DBE and non-DBE firms for ARC’s contracts.
 - Effects of discrimination on DBE business opportunities.
 - Ensuring a level playing field for DBEs competing for ARC contracts.
- It was clarified that the DBE Consultation meeting is non-binding but will guide ARC’s future policy and goal revisions aligned with FTA, FHWA, and GDOT guidance.

2. Overview of DBE Program and New Federal Requirements

- *John Orr* presented an overview of the DBE program’s purpose, emphasizing remedying the effects of discrimination and promoting fair competition.
- Recent federal updates (Interim Final Rule, Oct 3, 2025) remove race and gender presumptions of disadvantage.
 - All applicants must now prove individual social and economic disadvantage through a personal narrative.
 - All existing DBEs must be recertified under this standard.
- ARC must resubmit its DBE Plan to the FTA by November 1, 2025, covering goals for 2026–2028.
- Proposed DBE Goals:
 - FTA Projects: 28.72%
 - FHWA Projects: 22.23%
- These figures will be subject to revision following further federal guidance and GDOT recertification updates.

Summary of Comments

3. Public Comment and Input Procedure

- *Elizabeth Sanford* explained the public comment process via a Microsoft Forms link in the meeting chat.
- Participants could speak for two minutes or submit written comments through a Public Input Form or via email to the interim DBE Director. Written comments must be received by October 27, 2025.
- Four discussion questions were presented covering:
 1. Realism and feasibility of ARC’s proposed DBE goals.
 2. Opportunities and challenges for DBEs in transportation planning.
 3. Accessibility and fairness of ARC contracting opportunities.
 4. Open/general questions or technical inquiries about DBE methodology.

5. Stakeholder Question and Answer Highlights

a. Project Types

- *Kimberly King (GDOT)* inquired about the types of projects ARC contracts that could involve DBEs.
- *John Orr* clarified ARC contracts are mainly for transportation planning and surveys, including:
 - County transportation plans
 - Transit and Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) studies
 - Travel pattern and household surveys
- *Haley Berry* added that consultant contracts often include public engagement, modeling, and data analysis components.

b. Comparison of Past and Current DBE Goals

- *MaKara Rumley (Hummingbird)* asked to hear more about ARC's previous DBE goal percentages.
- *Haley Berry* confirmed the previous DBE goal was 16.7% (combined for FTA and FHWA).
- *Kevin Weeton (Consultant)* explained the new higher goals reflect:
 - Updated availability data of DBE firms.
 - Narrowed market area analysis based on bidder history.

c. GDOT's Implementation of the Interim Final Rule

- *Kimberly King (GDOT)* outlined GDOT's extensive effort to re-evaluate all ~4,000 certified firms:
 - Each firm must submit a personal narrative detailing individual disadvantage.
 - GDOT is developing a standardized form and instructions for submission and review.
 - Training will be provided for GDOT, MARTA, and partner agencies to ensure consistent evaluations.
 - GDOT plans to host a public informational session at their headquarters to explain the process.
 - No specific timeline yet, but reevaluation will begin "as soon as practicable."

d. Concerns from DBE Representatives

- *MaKara Rumley (Hummingbird)* expressed concern about the burden and emotional toll of the personal narrative requirement, describing it as "extractive" and "trauma-inducing."
- She questioned who would judge the narratives and what criteria would define sufficient disadvantage.
- *Kimberly King* acknowledged the concern and emphasized GDOT's intent to:
 - Base assessments on SBA 8(a) program standards.
 - Ensure consistency, fairness, and staff training.
 - Work collaboratively with other state DOTs to align best practices.

5. Closing Remarks

- *Haley Berry* thanked all participants for their contributions and reiterated:
 - Comments and discussion will be incorporated into the DBE Plan development.
 - ARC is committed to maintaining open dialogue and transparency with the DBE community.
- The public input window remains open until October 27, 2025 for additional written comments.

List of Attendees

This list includes all external participants what logged onto the Teams meeting while it was in session.

Name	Company or Agency
Belinda Morrow	2M Design Consultants
<i>Not provided</i>	IPCOMM
<i>Not provided</i>	IPLACEMENT, INC
Akyiaa Morrison	SMNEXT
Brian Hightower	Hightower Media
Brittany Israel	Lumenor Consulting Group
Byron Rushing	Toole Design Group
Caroline Evans	Barrow County
Chandler Fincher	Southeastern Engineering, Inc
Dawn Johnson	Dawson County
Donett Yahzid	Corporate Environmental Risk Management
Gavin Ireland	Georgia Green Energy Services LLC
Genine Bryant	Corporate Environmental Risk Management
Haley Carmack	2MNEXT
Brittany Helliard	Kimley-Horn
Jackie Tyson	New South Associates
Jason Dickerson	VHB
JENNIFER	Not provided
Jewana Helmstetter	USDOT Mid South Atlantic SBTRC
Lauren Leary	Spatial Plans
Lee	Not provided
MaKara Rumley	Hummingbird

Matt Tester	BJH Advisors
Gina Putthoff	Pond & Co
Scott Jordan	Southeastern Engineering
Sulla Hamer	Not provided
Vanessa Lira	Toole Design
Vida Mannings	The Collaborative Firm
Alex Williams	McMillan Pazdan Smith