

SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

SANDAG

JUNE 2022

THE DBE Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and Small Business Edition

A DBE SUCCESS STORY:

The Mid-Coast Trolley Project



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MID-COAST DBE AND SB Success Stories

The following are success stories from DBE and SB firms that have worked on the Mid-Coast Trolley project. Their experiences on this mega project has helped them grow their emerging firms as well as gain tremendous opportunities on other construction projects across California and the nation. The success of these firms proves the positive impact Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and Small Business programs can have on small and diverse firms to ensure that they are not only surviving but also leading the way toward U.S. economic expansion and growth.



Atwood Hay Inc.

Atwood Hay Inc. is a woman-owned DBE firm specializing in general and electrical construction on state, federal, military, and public work projects. In the past, Atwood has completed a variety of Industrial Commercial Construction projects from tenant remodels, building administrative space in aircraft hangars, to water and sewer infrastructure repairs and expansions. Atwood was first introduced to the Mid Coast Project in March 2018 to oversee the highway and for the installation of the 477 High Rail Installation Catenary Poles. Although they faced some challenges due to COVID, they collaborated with a Kentucky Steel Mill Company to ensure the necessary supplies and materials was available for the project and was able to stay on schedule successfully. Atwood is immensely proud to be a part of a great team on such a grand scope of infrastructure for the San Diego region with hopes to instill their motto: “Building the future. Restoring the Past.”



Aurora Industrial Hygiene

Aurora Industrial Hygiene is a women, minority, and veteran-owned DBE certified firm with over 20 years' experience as industrial hygiene consultants. Aurora was a subcontractor to Rincon Consultants, Inc. for the Mid-Coast Project. Their role on Mid-Coast began as a small scope to prepare compliance plans and conduct safety training focused on industrial hygiene, such as asbestos and lead abatement for MCTC employees and subcontractors. Aurora's initial contract value was approximately \$2k, which increased to approximately \$88k on Mid-Coast. Aurora stated that they enjoyed their involvement with the Mid Coast project and how privileged they were to contribute to such a historic project for San Diego. Aurora continues to provide services for both public and private sector clients, including federal and local government entities, insurance carriers, legal firms, construction contractors, environmental consultants, aerospace firms, airports, school districts and universities.



CGO Construction Company

Established in 1987, C G O Construction Company is a Black American-owned DBE and SB certified business located in Ontario, CA. The firm performs general construction services to federal, state, and local agencies. C G O was contracted by MCTC to remove trees and clear brush and ground cover to create an open working site to extend and construct the Mid-Coast Trolley system. Their initial contract value was \$754k which increased to approximately \$1.7 million. As a result, the company was able to receive bigger contracts with other agencies because of their experience and size of their contract with MCTC. C G O has experience in undertaking projects that involve challenges in the civil/heavy construction, engineering, design build, site development, dams, channels, and building construction field as a whole. Their advice for DBE and SB firms is to continue to do quality work and network closely with the general contractor of the project you are seeking work with.



Diego & Son Printing, Inc.

Founded in 1972, Diego & Son Printing Inc. is a local family-owned Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Small Business (SB), and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE). Focused on commercial and promotional printing, Diego & Son first became involved with the Mid-Coast Trolley Project in 2015. Their initial contract grew from \$5k to \$25k. Diego & Son shared that being involved with the Mid-Coast Trolley Project has helped increase their firm's exposure in providing printing services to other regional government agencies. Reflecting on their work on the project, the firm has been able to establish a collaborative relationship with SANDAG in understanding the project's scope of work while also understanding the importance of delivering high quality products. Some words of wisdom they would like to share to anyone who is thinking about government contracting is not to be discouraged by the process; "Stick with it and do not give up." Diego & Son Printing Inc. takes pride in being a small local family-owned business who has participated in the largest transportation project in the San Diego region to date.



Diversified

Diversified Landscape Co. is a women-owned DBE and SB firm who serves the southern and central California regions specializing in federal, state, local and commercial landscape construction. Starting in 2015, Diversified has served as the landscape subcontractor on the Mid-Coast Project to provide erosion control such hydroseeding. Diversified's contract value increased from \$31k to \$21 million and grew their employees from 8 to 45 on the project. In addition, their experience on Mid-Coast has gained them new opportunities with other San Diego public agencies. They expressed that the highlight of working on Mid-Coast has been all the people coming together to bring San Diego a first-class transportation project. Diversified advises DBE and SB firms that "No job is ever too small to pass up and to use all available outreach programs that are offered by each agency and General Contractors because they want you to succeed so they can have a successful project. With all the resources there are, don't be afraid of a large project either." Diversified's motto is: "Growing today for a greener tomorrow."



JLM Strategic Talent Partners

JLM Strategic Talent Partners is a Black, woman-owned firm founded in 2011 and based in Long Beach, CA. The firm provides professional staffing and recruiting services. After attending many SANDAG outreach events, JLM's Business Development team was introduced to the MCTC Project Manager and began to network and research the needs of the Mid-Coast Project which landed them a scope to provide temporary staffing for an initial \$80k. Due to their great work their contract grew tremendously to \$1.8 million. They also started with one contracted person on their team and have employed 30 to 40 contracted employees over the years. JLM shared a compelling story about an employee placed on the Mid-Coast Project. The employee was a young, single mom who was working a night job and highly driven to be successful in her job. She started as a receptionist, but quickly grew from that position to an accounting role. She received pay raises and was able to quit her night job and support herself and child with the MCTC position. JLM is a hub for creating opportunities at the worker-level. They continue to have a close-knit relationship with MCTC and have been able to expand their business to other locations in California. JLM expressed that small and diverse businesses should "Make sure to put yourself out there..." in regard to attending networking and workshop events.

LA Steel Services Inc.

LA Steel Services Inc. is a woman-owned DBE and SB certified firm that provides construction services in furnishing and installing reinforcing steel. The Mid-Coast project enabled LA Steel to grow their company when they were a very small company and had only been in business for 17 months when they received their Mid-Coast contract. LA Steel was able to manage our growth carefully on Mid-Coast. They are very happy to have worked with MCTC as they were very organized and considerate of the firm's DBE and SB status. To have their contract value grow from \$700k to \$6.5 million was a huge highlight for LA Steel. This was proof that they were performing well and that MCTC trusted them to "deliver the goods". It also allowed LA Steel to put systems and procedures in place to monitor/control a large volume of work. LA Steel's advice to small and disadvantaged businesses is to "Pay attention to the paperwork. Review the project schedule to verify your work durations are achievable and that you understand the sequence of the work. Make sure you meet any deadlines your general contractor has and if you cannot meet a deadline let your GC know as soon as possible."



Leinaia's Transportation

Leinaia's Transportation is a thriving DBE woman-owned trucking firm. Before the Mid-Coast Project started, the owner, Leinaia King, attended numerous small business outreach events and workshops hosted by SANDAG and MCTC. At one of the events, she sat next to the VP of MCTC who listened to her story and that was the conversation that launched her firm's phenomenal success. King started the project with a single truck that she purchased at a salvage yard and did most of her work out of the cab of her truck. Fast forward to the height of Mid-Coast construction, she now has 18 trucks, 20 employees, and numerous heavy equipment that has expanded her scope of work. Additionally, Leinaia's Transportation's initial contract value for Mid-Coast was \$500,000 that increased to more than \$9 million due to their remarkable work. King has overcome many challenges of being a woman-owned firm in construction, but that has not stopped her from achieving success in numerous projects with public agencies and more!





Lucas Builders Inc.

For over 10 years, Lucas Builders, Inc. has been delivering excellence as an engineering utility contractor in Southern California. Lucas Builders is a DBE certified Asian-Pacific-owned firm that is capable to handle a wide range of construction projects, such as installing storm drains, sanitary sewer lines, water lines, drainage systems, fire lines, electrical conduits, light framing, sound control, shoring and specialty metal services that include custom fencing, railings, and fall protection. By joining MCTC's Construction Bench Program, similar to the SANDAG Bench Program, Lucas Builders gained a contract on the Mid-Coast Trolley Project. Their initial contract value grew from \$35k to more than \$45 million. Additionally, their company grew from 35 employees to 54 on this project alone. They have been able to add their experience to their firm's resume and gain additional work with other public agencies throughout Los Angeles County. The firm expressed that "Mid-Coast is one of the best projects they have worked on, and this opportunity brought a tremendous amount of attention to their firm." The firm's motto is to focus on "Leadership, Reliability, Quality & Safety."



Moor Electric

Moor Electric is an electrical services subcontractor on the Mid-Coast Project. The company was established in 2001 and is a Black American owned DBE and SB firm. The owner, Dwayne Henry, learned about the project through outreach events and more significantly as a protégé in the Construction & Collaboration (C&C) Mentor Protégé Program. His C&C mentor was MCTC, and they provided Henry the tools and resources to be successful in the industry. Henry's goal was to get his foot in the door with government contracting. Successfully, Moor Electric eventually secured an initial \$25k contract on the Mid-Coast Project which has grown to \$1.5 million. Their greatest achievement on the project was the installation of the Gilman Bridge lights and signage. With the experience they gained, they were able to increase their scope of work to include meter pedestals installs, lighting installs, and troubleshooting. The project also allowed them to get lots of media exposure and new experience in civil and railway projects in Southern California. Moor Electric urges small and disadvantaged businesses "To keep doing what you are doing...it will pay off."



Paradigm Mechanical Corporation

Paradigm Mechanical Corporation specializes in the design-build of heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) mechanical systems from commercial to government facilities in the Southern California Region. Paradigm is wholly woman-owned DBE and SB firm and were first connected to the Mid-Coast Trolley Project when they first signed up to become part of the SANDAG Bench Program and received their initial contract in 2017. The Paradigm Team is extremely proud to have participated in the largest transportation project to date in the San Diego region, making it the biggest public works project they have worked on since their company's inception. As a result of their participation, Mid-Coast allowed Paradigm to not only work outside their comfort zone and face new challenges but also provided an opportunity for company growth. Reflecting on their work and experience, Paradigm would like to encourage other DBE and SB firms to not be intimidated by government contracts and not be afraid to ask for support or resources. Their advice is that "There are many people along the way that are willing to coach and give advice. Take advantage of networking opportunities to encourage your professional growth."



Payco Specialties

Payco Specialties first became involved in the Mid-Coast Trolley Project back in 2016. They specialize in striping and marking, striving to make airports, highways, military bases, and roads safer. Payco Specialties focus is to provide high quality service in installation and products offered. Since their involvement in the Mid-Coast Trolley Project, the Payco team has been able to build their personnel by nearly 50% and secured over one hundred weeks of guaranteed construction work. In reflecting on their work thus far, Payco Specialties takes "...pride in being involved in a groundbreaking project that current and future generations will be all be able to benefit from." Payco Specialties has been women owned since 1975 and would like to encourage other DBE and SB firms to: "Take risk and watch as the hard work pays off in the forms of business growth and team building."



SAE Technical Services, LLC

Founded in 1978, SAE Technical Services, LLC is an Asian-Pacific American-owned engineering and construction services firm. Through targeted outreach efforts to small and disadvantaged businesses, SAE quickly became involved in the Mid-Coast Trolley Project by providing services for quality control consulting. They started on the project with an initial contract value of \$100k which grew to \$450k. Their involvement with Mid-Coast enabled their firm to survive financial hardship brought on by COVID-19 pandemic. Contrary to other businesses, SAE was able to maintain operations and gain not only work experience but also achieve financial stability to take their business to a higher level. As a San Francisco based company, they have also been able to successfully = expand their service area to include the Southern California region, specifically the San Diego area. Looking back at their experience, SAE is thankful for the level of support offered from everyone involved in the project, especially during a global pandemic. As the project has concluded, the SAE team would like to highlight the importance of networking to new DBE and SB firms to stay engaged as these opportunities really produce results.



Sequoia Consultants, Inc.

Sequoia Consultants is a Subcontinent-Asian American-owned firm established in 2005 that aims to provide quality construction solutions to the transportation industry. Dating back to 2015, the Sequoia team first became aware of the Mid-Coast Trolley Project through SANDAG outreach networking events. They secured a contract with MCTC for an initial value of \$400k to provide construction QA/QC and materials testing and inspection services. That contract grew to approximately \$8 million. As a result, the Sequoia team was able to increase staff efforts in their San Diego office and create sustainability for their firm. Looking back, something that stands out to this firm, is their ability to staff the project on an aggressive schedule and requirements from multiple jurisdictions. This required their team to have multiple certifications to satisfy the corresponding jurisdictional requirements in the largest San Diego project to date. Moving forward, a piece of advice the Sequoia's team would like to share with future DBE and SB firms looking to become involved in government contracting, is to ensure your product/service is of the highest quality. Ensuring your product/service is of the highest quality will allow your firm to bring value and expertise to the contractor/agency.



SRK Engineering

Founded in 2014, SRK Engineering is a DBE certified Asian-Pacific, woman-owned firm. SRK is a general engineering contractor that specializes in underground infrastructure (water, sewer, storm drain) and retaining walls. They attended numerous Mid-Coast outreach events and after multiple meetings with MCTC, SRK was given a chance to evaluate, propose, design, and construct a stress wall or counterfort wall new to the railroad industry. Not only did the construction of these alternative walls save the schedule by meeting the critical track cutover, but it also provided huge dollar savings to taxpayer funds. This was their very first contract as a contractor. As the project developed and construction changes happened, SRK Engineering was able to gain more contract value, work experience, and bring on additional employees. Their team of two has since then grown to fifty and their contract value grew from \$500k to \$41 million. In reflecting on their experience, SRK states, “We worked hard to meet deadlines, to satisfy all requirements and get the retaining walls built. MCTC was great to work for.” A piece of advice they would like to share for those just starting on government contracting is to be “the go to contractor to solve your client problems. If you can show them, you do quality work they will give you more opportunities.”



The Solis Group Enterprises, Inc.

The Solis Group, also known as TSG Enterprises, Inc., is a Hispanic-, woman-owned firm that was founded in 1992. TSG first became involved with the Mid-Coast Trolley Project in 2014 when they were contracted to perform labor compliance, document control, and public relation services on the project. The firm’s initial contract value grew from \$285k to \$3.2 million, five times over, since the project’s inception. Through this mega project, TSG highlighted that their biggest success was becoming deeply integrated with MCTC to address project controls and compliance issues. Their experiences led them to gaining new contracting opportunities in the Southern California region. TSG is proud and happy to have participated on the largest transportation project that the San Diego region has seen to date. Reflecting on their experience, TSG would like to encourage small and disadvantaged businesses to talk to the leading agency early and often as such conversations are helpful in starting out with government contracting.



Triumph-Geo Synthetics, Inc.

Triumph-Geo Synthetics, Inc. is a woman-owned DBE and SB certified firm that provides services such as geogrids, geotextiles, pipe and fittings, stormwater systems, liners, cellular confinement, trench drain, erosion control products, geo-composites, and specialty products. Through a SANDAG outreach event, Triumph was able to get connected to MCTC and was contracted for the Mid-Coast Project. Their initial contract value increased from \$13k to \$790k. Their team is immensely proud to have been a valuable construction material supplier for the Mid-Coast Project. This project has given Triumph ongoing opportunities to diversify their products and supply materials. Their success derived from Triumph being a trusted supplier for many different products throughout the construction of Mid-Coast. Triumph encourages DBE and SB firms to “Take advantage of the many training sessions available to learn how to be a valued business partner for the contractor. Never cut corners and make honesty and integrity one of the core values of your business. Always provide products that meet or exceed the specifications and provide quality customer service.”