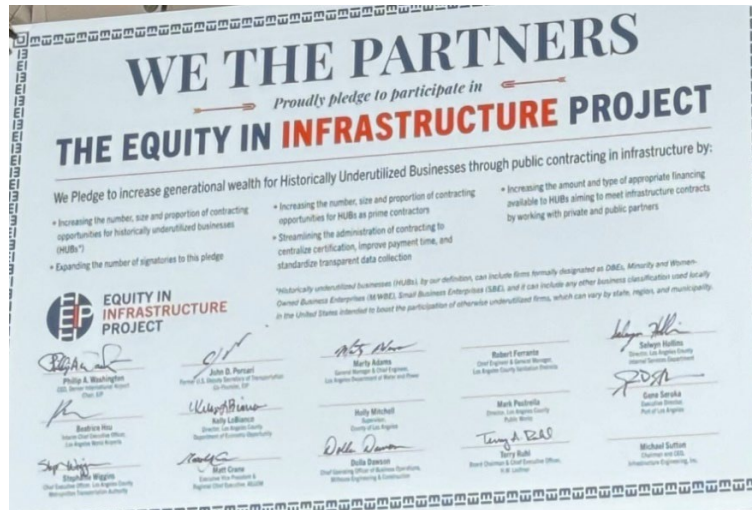


Transitioning from Symbolic to Systemic Change

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Merriam Webster defines **Opportunity** as “...a favorable juncture of circumstances.” The concept is simple: Those of us in positions to help provide opportunities to those who need it most have a responsibility to do so. If not us, who?

It never gets old experiencing the reactions and remarks evoked from people at the Equity in Infrastructure Project (EIP) Pledge signing ceremonies. In fact, these ceremonies just seem to get more poignant with each subsequent stroke of the pen. Truth be told, the sole reason the EIP Pledge signing ceremony is moving every time is that perching behind every signature is a promise to invest in more people; this is undeniable progress in Equity.



Secretary Omishakin with new EIP Pledge signatories

This EIP pledge packs a powerful punch as it represents so much more than what is written on paper. Each signatory—a leader of a transportation-related entity—commits

to a life-altering equity breakthrough. Conceived by Denver International Airport CEO Phil Washington, EIP's mission is to build generational wealth and reduce the racial wealth gap by improving public infrastructure contracting practices. Opportunity creation leads to success, and there are few recipients more warranted than Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBS) across California and the rest of the country. Had you told me a decade ago that not only would such a pledge exist, but that top level private and public organizations would jump on board to sign, I would have placed that in the wishful thinking category. But, on the contrary; as of today, there have been 55 heads of national firms, agencies, departments of transportation, districts, ports and many other enterprises who have signed on to act in the interest of improving lives, not merely have conversations about it. Right before our eyes we are seeing meaningful action and headway unfold.

Last month I had the honor of speaking at another EIP Pledge signing, this one at the Los Angeles Infrastructure Forum, hosted by Engineering News Record (ENR). A new



'California Plan' was unveiled with nine new signatories committing to boost their support for HUBS into the future. A true win-win, the pledge will serve countless people: those who sign and commit to the pledge, those who receive contract opportunities otherwise unavailable— and those within families and communities who, from the direct and indirect cascade effect, also reap its benefits. As we go from 'symbolic' to 'systemic,' these commitments will be the bond that holds us steadfast.



EIP Founder Phil Washington with Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza, Executive Director for Racial Equity for Los Angeles County; Kelly LoBianco, Director, Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity; Terry Mestas, Chief Development Officer at Los Angeles World Airports