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**Industry Award Winners Named at
Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO)
of Northern California Event**

San Francisco, CA. The Northern California Chapter of the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) honored seven outstanding individuals and businesses for their transportation achievements and contributions to the industry at its 5th Annual Industry Awards and Recognition Reception late last week at the Carnelian Room in San Francisco. The event raised more than \$30,000 for the organization's scholarship program for minority students living or attending colleges in the Bay Area.

As an introduction to the evening, Chapter President Lee Davis and COMTO National President/CEO Julie Cunningham stressed the importance of including minority and small businesses in contracting opportunities resulting from stimulus funding. At the national level, COMTO has been working with President Obama's transportation team to ensure that minority voices are heard in the discussion.

"Our annual event forwards COMTO's mission – to promote minority businesses and recognize individuals and organizations that advance minorities in transportation," Davis noted. Lifetime Achievement Award winner Mary King, Assistant General Manager of Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) acknowledged the "incredible efforts [of COMTO] on behalf of the organization, the scholarship program, and minorities in transportation and in need of transportation."

Noted media personality Barbara Rodgers, one of the most recognizable newscasters on CBS 5 Eyewitness News for more than three decades, acted as Mistress of Ceremonies. Awardees were recognized for advancing COMTO's goals of providing equal access to careers in transportation and advancing the transportation interests of communities of color.

Lifetime Achievement: *MARY KING*, Assistant General Manager, AC Transit, former member of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and former Alameda County Supervisor, is being recognized for extraordinary leadership in advancing major Bay Area transportation initiatives and being a fearless advocate for those who depend on public transportation.

Special Recognition Award: *BEVAN DUFTY*, Chair of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, and Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, is being recognized for his leadership as the SFCTA Plans and Programs Committee Chair, advocacy for the development of the SFMTA Third Street Light Rail Project, and role in promoting inclusion of minority businesses enterprises in transportation projects.

Employer of the Year – Public Sector: *CALTRANS* (California Department of Transportation) is being recognized for instituting the Small Business Program which collectively includes Small, Disabled Veteran and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. Through maximizing outreach efforts and partnering with government and industry agencies, the Small Business Program provides services and resources to remove barriers and increase participation in Caltrans projects.

Employer of the Year – Private Sector: *JACOBS ENGINEERING GROUP*, one of the largest global providers of professional transportation services, Jacobs is being recognized for building a culturally diverse workforce – over 20% of Jacobs managerial workforce are people of color. Jacobs partners with small and disadvantaged businesses to maximize access and expertise, and strongly supports COMTO’s scholarship programs.

Employee of the Year: *ALBERT YEE*, Director, Highway and Arterial Operations, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, is being recognized for extraordinary competence in transportation and commitment to increasing opportunities for minorities. A visionary transportation official, Albert was one of the founders of the Caltrans Highway Operations Academy, nationally renowned for providing training in the Operations field.

Minority Business Enterprise of the Year: *MERRIWETHER & WILLIAMS INSURANCE SERVICES* is being recognized for its success in developing the SFMTA Third Street Light Rail Surety and Bond & Financing Program, the City & County of San Francisco Surety Bond Program, and the Port of Oakland Surety Bond & Contractor Financing Program, which increased the participation of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in transportation-related capital projects.

President’s Award: *GHASSAN SALAMEH*, Booz Allen Hamilton’s leader in its global transportation business. His mission is to provide world class transportation strategy, management, technology and operations services to United States and international clients across all transportation modes. Salameh was recognized for his leadership as well as his support of the advancement of minorities in the transportation field.

Honorary Co-Hosts for the awards reception include Chairpersons of the Boards of Directors of the Bay Area’s preeminent transportation and land use agencies, including the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority, the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, the Association of Bay Area Governments, the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, the Port of San Francisco, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, the San Mateo County Transit District, the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, and the Water Emergency Transportation Authority, among others.

Key individuals who attended included the Honorable Rocky Fernandez, President of AC Transit; the Honorable Alice Lai Bitker, Chair of the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA) Board of Directors as well as President of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors; Alameda County Treasurer Donald White and San Francisco County Treasurer Jose Cisneros; the Honorable Tom Blalock, President of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Board of Directors; Leslie Rogers, Federal Transit Authority Regional Administrator; Ann Flemer, Deputy Director of Policy for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC); the Honorable Tom Nolan San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board Chairman; the Honorable Sophie Maxwell, Commissioner of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority and a member of the county's Board of Supervisors; and, from San Mateo County, the Honorable Rose Guilbault, Vice Chair of the SamTrans Board of Directors and the Honorable Shirley Harris, a member of SamTrans' Board of Directors.

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About the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO): COMTO is a national, multi-ethnic organization founded in 1971 in Washington, DC to advocate for the transportation careers and transportation needs of minorities. The Northern California Chapter of COMTO was established in 1985 to promote the development of people of color within the transportation industry in the San Francisco Bay Area and the greater Sacramento area. COMTO's membership includes transportation officials from most of the major transportation agencies and transportation-related business sectors in the two aforementioned areas. COMTO's scholarship application will be available online in early September 2009 at www.comtonorcal.org