



A July 2017 photo of Greg Winfree (left), Agency Director for Texas A&M Transportation Institute, with Byung Soo Kim, President of Korea Agency for Infrastructure Technology Advancement

Texas A&M Transportation Institute's Winfree Shares Vision for 21st Century Transportation

By Erica Bender

For Gregory (Greg) Winfree, learning by doing is what has driven him to achieve in 30 years what few others have accomplished in their lifetimes.

With an esteemed career comprised of diverse legal and executive-level positions, today, he serves as Agency Director of one of the nation's foremost higher education-affiliated transportation research agencies – the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI).

Established in 1950, TTI's mission is based on three primary objectives: to identify and solve transportation problems through research, to transfer technology and knowledge to others, and to develop diverse human resource tools to meet future transportation needs. The institute's research and developmental programs provide solutions to a diverse array of challenges facing all modes of transportation, connecting research efforts across state lines and abroad by conducting over 700 research projects totaling about \$61 million each year. In addition to developing technologies and strategies that save the state and nation thousands of lives and billions of dollars, one of TTI's main priorities is to prepare students for transportation-related careers.

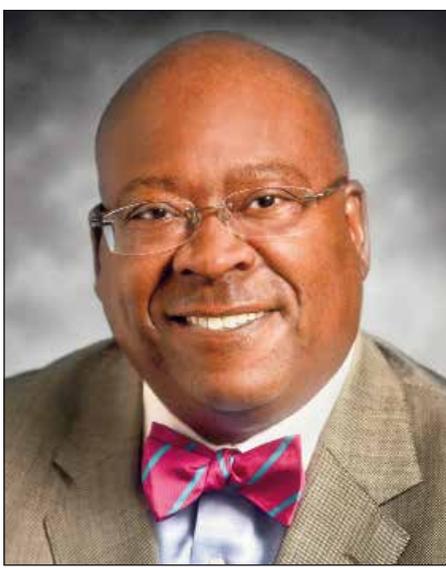
Winfree views his role with TTI as a platform perfectly suited to his talents and goals. In his interview with Texas Contractor, he shares how TTI's vision for 21st century transportation advancements complement the transportation industry's workforce development efforts as well as higher education initiatives.

Where did you attend college?

I earned a Bachelor of Science in communications and public relations from St. John's University and a law degree from Georgetown University.

What are some of your major career milestones?

I started my legal career as an associate at Venable, LLP, a prominent Washington, D.C.-based law firm. Then, I was a trial attorney in the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Civil Rights Division. Over the span of two decades, I served as corporate counsel for several Fortune 500 corporations that operated in various technical industries. I also initially served as Chief Counsel for the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT's) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology, and later was sworn in as the Assistant Secretary. As Assistant Secretary, I was responsible for a \$450 million budget



Greg Winfree, Agency Director of the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

and oversaw more than 1,000 scientific, data analysis and administrative staff members who supported USDOT's multi-modal transportation initiatives. In December 2016, I was appointed Agency Director of TTI.

What is your proudest accomplishment in your career?

Serving as USDOT's Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology. Unless you're a cabinet member, that's about as high as you can get in a politically appointed role.

What life experiences or people were most influential during your career?

My experiences as a lawyer helped me appreciate the power of relationships. Several colleagues served as mentors during my early career days, such as the Hon. William Daniel Quarles, Jr. (who was a partner at a law firm when I first started practicing), and also David Goewey, a former partner at Venable, LLP who has since passed away. These individuals provided me with guidance and gave me leeway to figure things out on my own – to learn by doing as opposed to telling me exactly how to do things.

Also of note is my experience at the DOJ, where a tight-knit "fraternity" of men and women serve as members of "the nation's law firm." Here, I learned how to be humble in the execution of great responsibility and influence. It's quite a powerful position to be a trial or U.S. attorney. It goes to some people's heads, but for me it was a great training ground in humility.

What led you to TTI, and how have your professional experiences equipped you for the Agency Director role?

I've been a lifelong technophile, and even have a couple of design and utility patents in my own name. I have a special affinity for innovation, which naturally translates to my respect for TTI's endorsement of creative, forward-thinking transportation solutions. My six-and-a-half years at USDOT served as a principal training ground for my current role as Agency Director of TTI, as I had similar responsibilities at USDOT.

At USDOT, I learned about the breadth, depth and reputation of TTI and had the chance to work with several TTI researchers and executives. When the opportunity presented itself to join TTI, to me it was the stars lining up. I'm extraordinarily fortunate and happy to be part of a world-class team that's dedicated to transforming the future of transportation for the people of Texas.

What is TTI's vision for 21st century transportation?

A successful 21st century transportation system must be different from systems employed in the past. TTI researchers serve as objective transportation experts, with expertise in areas such as engineering, planning, economics, policy, landscape architecture, environmental sciences, computer science and the social sciences. Their efforts facilitate informed policy decisions and solve transportation challenges among local, state and national agencies and groups.

At TTI, we work to leverage the present transportation infrastructure more effectively and operate existing transportation facilities in an optimal manner. We seek to manage transportation demands by studying usage patterns and identifying choices, such as additional transit availability and bicycling and pedestrian options, as well as behavioral changes, such as telecommuting, flexible work options, and other trip-reduction strategies. Freight transportation and intermodal connections are also high priorities. Additionally, our experts focus on how to connect our roadway infrastructure to fast-developing automated and connected vehicle technologies, and the policy implications of these new technologies. The results of our efforts will be a comprehensive, systematic approach to providing a productive, scalable 21st century transportation system for generations to come.

TTI is constructing a new headquarters building at Texas A&M's RELLIS campus, slated to open in March 2019. What are some of the strategic benefits in choosing this location?

RELLIS is an acronym that stands for the university's core values: respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity and selfless service. We're extraordinarily pleased to be located at this world-class research and education campus. Our new headquarters will be next door to the new Center for Infrastructure Renewal (CIR), the largest lab of its kind focused on structures, pavements, materials, and next-generation infrastructure innovations. The CIR will serve as a research and training hub for all levels of government, as well as for university students and researchers, private and corporate partners and others.

Our proximity to this lab will enhance the work we've done traditionally on the campus and also streamline workforce development collaboration with industry partners like the Associated General Contractors. Educational opportunities will be available to people from all backgrounds, from high school grads wanting to focus on trade careers, to military veterans seeking viable careers after returning from duty, to industry professionals interested in obtaining doctorate degrees in the trades.

In what ways does TTI enhance the educational experience for Texas A&M students?

In addition to being a state agency, TTI is pleased to be a part of the engineering continuum at Texas A&M. We annually engage over 200 students on research projects and in support of our business functions. Put plainly, Texas A&M students gain practical experience through applying their skills, talents and education on real-world challenges in a manner that is consistent with our principal mission as a provider of applied-research solutions.

Through our urban offices, we also engage students from campuses across Texas. Moreover, many TTI researchers specialize in fields such as engineering, landscape architecture, urban planning, agricultural economics, public policy and law. These expert academicians often teach at campuses across the A&M System, bringing real-world experience into the classroom.