

\$7.5 Billion Dollar Houston Metro Contract Won By HNTB Heads To Court For Copyright Infringement

Profits and Principles: Investigating the Accusations of IP Leveraging by a Corporate Giant for a \$7.5 Billion Government Contract

HOUSTON, TEXAS, USA, August 22, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a legal showdown that has captured national attention, Web Apps Agency, a black owned software company has filed a groundbreaking [lawsuit against HNTB Corporation, JTI and city donor](#) Dr. Carlos Vital and others, alleging copyright infringement for profit to secure an historic \$7.5 billion dollar Houston Metro, METRONext public transportation contract. The allegations call for more research in corporate accountability, diversity and inclusion, and it highlights the ongoing struggles faced by minority entrepreneurs seeking equal opportunities to provide services for government backed infrastructure projects.



Steve Granson
Deputy Program Manager

Program Manager of The \$7.5 Billion Dollar METRONext Moving Forward plan

Web Apps Agency (WAA), founded by Marcus Brown has been at the forefront of technological innovation, providing cutting-edge solutions for years in many industries. Despite the proven track record of excellence and expertise in the public transportation field, the company claims to have faced an uphill battle after being removed and unpaid from the multi-billion-dollar Houston METRONext contract. The lawsuit asserts that HNTB Corporation, a prominent industrial titan founded in 1914 and Dr. Carlos Vital, engaged in practices that hindered the participation and growth of the small minority owner business by using WAA's IP to help win the \$7.5 billion-dollar public transportation contract.

The legal action brought forth by Web Apps Agency (WAA) has shed light on broader issues of inequality and unfair practices within the public transportation contracting landscape. The

implications of this lawsuit extend beyond the specifics of the Case Number: 4:2023cv01524, sparking discussions about the urgent need to address disparities in the allocation of public transportation contracts and to ensure equal access to opportunities for minority entrepreneurs. As society recognizes the importance of transparency, diversity and inclusion in the business world, the active project has catalyzed a reevaluation of existing federal policies and practices in the pursuit of promoting equitable opportunities for all, regardless of company size or ownership structure.

On April 7, 2023, [Reporter Anayeli Ruiz of KHOU](#) revealed the groundbreaking story about upset residents on the East-End of Houston regarding the lack of community engagement inclusion for the METRONext transit expansion plan by Houston Metro.

“Houston Metro contracted HNTB as a prime contractor to develop the multi-billion-dollar expansion plan and they appointed subcontractor JTI to accomplish the University Corridor and Lockwood community engagement task. Ultimately, METRO was blamed due to the subcontractor’s work. The WAA team developed the initial proposed community engagement plan that included a multilingual community engagement strategy as the subcontractor for JTI, but HNTB used our IP, strategy, and minority involvement in the proposal to win the \$7.5 Billion contract and did not integrate the strategy.”, said WAA Founder.

“The project took a negative turn when HNTB project manager Steve Granson, shared with me and JTI’s past CEO/Founder, Jason St. Luce that Dr. Carlos Vital demanded that all communication regarding the METRONext project and JTI should be discussed with Bridget Mickins and to no longer speak with me or the legal HNTB subcontractor holder, Jason St. Luce”, said Marcus.

“HNTB Houston Project managers Steve Granson and David Leard, along with Dr. Carlos Vital, Chairman of JTI and Bridget Mickins, the current CEO of JTI had alternative plans. They became non-responsive and removed my team and founder/past CEO of JTI, Jason St. Luce from the METRONext Project and took the contract from us, refiled SBE certifications and ended our payments.”, said Marcus.

On January 14, 2022, WAA received a cease-and-desist letter from JTI Investor/Chairman, Dr. Carlos Vital stating, “This communication serves as notice Just Touch Interactive is releasing you and WebApps and all of its subsidiaries as a subcontractor for technology services, as well as any and all other works, related and unrelated, effective immediately”, said Dr. Carlos Vital.

Currently, the SBE certified JTI corporation has been paid millions of Harris County tax payers dollars, while the Houston Political Donor and Chairman and shareholder of JTI, Dr. Carlos Vital and CEO Bridget Mickins are actively defending [fraud allegations](#) on a separate accusation and remain to work with HNTB.

On January 31, 2022, Marcus received another cease-and-desist letter from the Law Offices of Holland and Knight stating the following, “The law firm of Holland & Knight LLP is outside legal

counsel to Just Touch Interactive LLC ("JTI"). I have been made aware that you sent an email to certain employees of HNTB Inc., and certain employees of The Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, in which you made disparaging and derogatory remarks about JTI and its officers. In addition, you made an offer to complete work as an independent contractor for HNTB and Metro. It is hereby demanded that you cease and desist from making mention of JTI or any of its employees or officers to any person or entity from this day forward. If your above actions are repeated in any manner, a lawsuit for damages and injunctive relief will be filed against you. Please conduct yourself accordingly. " said attorney Derrick M. Mitchell.

The news is expected to be closely watched by stakeholders across the business and transportation sectors, as the outcome could set a significant precedent in shaping the future of public transportation contracting practices. The potential ramifications of the outcome could reverberate nationally, leading to enhanced transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in the bidding process for major infrastructure projects.

Inclusion requires intention for the public transportation sector and the Mayor of Los Angeles, Karen Bass is leading by example with strict DEI accountability measures for local transportation agencies such as LAX, LA Metro, Metrolink and all contractors to reduce systemic issues of small businesses being exploited by large corporate contractors.

As the eyes of the nation and federal agencies will remain fixed on the outcome that could transform the landscape of public transportation contracting and pave the way for greater equality and diversity in the business world.

Case Number:4:2023cv01524

17 U.S.C. § 504 Copyright Infringement Case

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