Although the scars left by Hurricane Sandy were still fresh and many continued to struggle in its aftermath, New York-New Jersey transportation industry professionals came together on January 31st at WTS-GNY’s 33rd Annual Meeting and 16th Annual W/M/DBE Expo with a renewed determination to use their expertise to revitalize, adapt, improve and make the region more resilient. Of course, WTS-GNY and its members will play an integral role in this process without straying from their mission to advance women in transportation.

With these lofty ambitions tacitly and explicitly established, the evening began with a presentation of the Member of the Year, Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership, Employer of the Year and Innovative Transport Solutions awards. The chapter was honored to have LIRR President Helena Williams and NJ Transit (NJT) Executive Director James Weinstein serve as keynote speakers.

In her opening remarks, WTS-GNY President Mary K. Murphy thanked the program’s sponsors and outlined the chapter’s plans for 2013, namely to focus on professional development and management training opportunities, as well as to continue to nurture future leaders through the Transportation YOU program.

Next, WTS-GNY Mentoring Committee Co-Chair Malinda Foy, 2012’s Member of the Year, introduced Julia Kerson, WTS-GNY treasurer and an environmental review project manager for the Port Authority of NY & NJ, as the 2013 recipient. “As a longtime WTS member and mentoring advocate, it is a joy for me to [present] the 2013 Member of the Year Award to Julia Kerson. An organization is only as good as the people who volunteer their time.

"Julia joined the WTS Board in 2010 in the very important role of treasurer, but she found her passion mentoring younger members and pushing WTS to create events for them. She spearheaded young professionals’ events that were less expensive, held at... continued on page 2
different times of day, and more fun. As a result of her efforts, our young professionals know that they are welcome, and needed, in our organization. Board members who work with Julia describe her as spirited, a breath of fresh air and tenacious – she often has an opinion and is not bashful to share. She is innovative and strategic.

“The NASA astronaut Mae Jemison said something that reminds me of Julia: ‘Never limit yourself because of others’ limited imagination; never limit others because of your own limited imagination.’”

For the often outspoken and self-assured Kerson, she was unusually quiet and modest as she accepted her award with a shy smile. “I’m grateful for this honor. It means a lot to me.”

The Member of the Year Award was followed by the Rosa M. Parks Diversity Leadership Award. Amy Peterson, president of the Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW), the 2012 recipient, bestowed this year’s honor on Flora Ramos of Tishman Construction Corporation.

“Flora has single-handedly placed women and minorities in construction projects and has [strived] to encourage diversity in the workplace,” Peterson noted. “She has made a difference for women on the World Trade Center [rebuilding effort]. Now, because of Flora, they can say [with pride], ‘I worked on the World Trade Center.’”

With verve, enthusiasm and humor, Bonsignore accepted the award. “Your meetings rock and the programs that [WTS] provides for women are amazing. It is an honor to be the Employer of the Year.” Bonsignore went on to offer a little background on her firm and women’s involvement at all levels.

The final award of the evening for Innovative Transport Solutions was given to MTA Bus Time. WTS-GNY President Mary K. Murphy bestowed this honor on the joint venture of New York City Transit (NYCT) Department of Buses and MTA Bus, Cambridge Systematics and OpenPlans. The popu-

**WTS ANNUAL MEETING**

*continued from page 1*

observed. “The company has supported WTS-GNY since its inception and has sponsored many events, as well as the Transportation YOU and Mentoring programs. VHB has many women in leadership positions and on the board.”

VHB received the Employer of the Year Award. From left: Susan O’Donnell; Janet Sharkey; Bob Dennison; Lisa DiTaranti; Marty Taub; Ruth Bonsignore; Colin Foley; Emmanuelle Humblet; and Lauren Wang.

VHB received the Employer of the Year Award. From left: Amy Peterson, president of the Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW), presented the Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award to Flora Ramos of Tishman Construction Corp.

The Innovative Transport Solutions Award was given to the joint venture of venture of NYCT Dept. of Buses and MTA Bus, Cambridge Systematics and OpenPlans for MTA Bus Time. From left: Jeff Maki, OpenPlans, Jennifer Strasser, Cambridge Systematics, MTA Bus Chief Darrell Irick, Craig Cirpriano, MTA Bus Operations and WTS-GNY President Mary K. Murphy.
lar MTA Bus Time is a customer information system that uses Global Positioning System (GPS) hardware and wireless communications technology to track the real-time location of buses. This innovation allows riders to use their computers, cellphones, smartphones or other technology devices to receive information on when the next bus will arrive at their stop. The system was first rolled out on Staten Island and it will soon go live in the Bronx.

“Technology is really going to be the way we tackle transportation in the future,” Murphy commented. “The public sector and the private sector – this is the way we’re going to solve transportation problems.”

Cambridge Systematics Principal and New York Office Director Jennifer Strasser, MTA’s Craig Cipriano and OpenPlans’ Jeff Maki were on hand to accept the award. Darrell Irick, the head of MTA Bus operations, noted, “The program is not only innovative from a bus perspective, but also innovative from a business perspective. MTA Bus Time’s usage is growing steadily.”

After basking in the glow of these successes, the evening wended its way to keynote addresses by LIRR President Helena Williams and NJT Executive Director James Weinstein.

“I admire the work that WTS does to encourage women to enter and advance in the transportation field,” Williams said. “As the first woman president of the LIRR, I have a special interest in helping women to succeed in this field.”

Williams went on to provide an overview of the challenges that she faces on a daily basis to deliver safe and reliable train service, whether it is Hurricane Sandy, a nor’easter or everyday track, signal or equipment issues. “[Sandy] was by far the worst disaster to hit our system. But the MTA bounced back faster than anyone expected….We tried to be responsive and honest with customers by communicating our goals and progress. My philosophy: Keep the customer at the forefront of what we plan and execute. So far, my philosophy has worked well.”

Despite extensive flooding, power loss and more than 600 downed trees, Williams pointed out that the LIRR restored service from Jamaica to Penn Station and to Brooklyn within 24 hours of the storm’s departure. Within 48 hours, the agency restored service between Great Neck and Penn Station on the Port Washington branch and between Ronkonkoma and Penn Station. Within 72 hours, she explained that the LIRR had service on its “Big Four” branches Port Washington, Ronkonkoma, Babylon and Huntington.

“The engineering department deployed more than 800 employees to inspect, assess and repair railroad infrastructure. They stayed in hotel rooms, slept on cots in offices and often left their own families without power and with damage at their own homes in order to ‘get the railroad service back.’ Without their dedication, we would not have been able to get the region moving again as fast as we did.

“If we ever need a reminder of how critical the MTA, LIRR, NJT and PATH are to our region, we need look no further than to those days when we were not able to run our trains.”

From left: New York Building Congress President Richard Anderson; Steve Brunner, Cubic; Angela Miller, Cubic; and Omar Alvarellos, Kaiser Consulting.

From left: David Strong, CH2M Hill; Jane Charalambous, Parsons; Monica Barrow, Parsons; and Thomas Klin, CH2M Hill.

From left: Leila Weissling, Jacobs; WTS-GNY Newsletter Committee Chair Daniella Bernett; and WTS-GNY Membership Committee Chair Erica DeCrescenzo.

From left: Lisa Schieferstein, Metro-North Railroad and WTS-GNY Vice President (NY) Linda Travis.
trains... We have a lot of work to do to make sure that our region is ready should we have another storm like Sandy.”

“Going forward, one of our highest priorities will be to work with Amtrak to make certain the East River tunnels are secure from future flooding. And we will look at other ways to harden our infrastructure, including our yards and substations. We are very grateful that the Senate finally passed the emergency relief bill. That will provide critical funding to the MTA for storm recovery and mitigation efforts.”

Williams then transitioned to the LIRR’s plans in 2013. She highlighted projects such as the Main Line Double Track, which she indicated was on an accelerated schedule with the design-build RFP set to be issued in April. The agency expects to award a contract by November and have shovels in the ground by year’s end. She called attention to the fact that Double Track will support economic development projects slated for this stretch of the LIRR, including Wyandanch Rising, the Ronkonkoma Hub and Heartland, and may lead to the reopening of the LIRR Republic Station to serve the Rt. 110 employment corridor. In addition, it will support improved service to MacArthur Airport, as well as create hundreds of construction jobs on Long Island where projects are needed.

NJT Executive Director James Weinstein built on the points Williams outlined in her speech. “I always find [WTS] events energizing. The enthusiasm that you bring to your programs and the industry is rejuvenating.

“Railroading is not just a job, it’s a profession, a dedication, a vocation – what people love and want to do.”

Weinstein discussed the “significant damage” inflicted by Sandy on NJT’s equipment and infrastructure system. “But within a very short time, we had restored service on the Northeast Corridor and on nine out of 12 lines.”

He suggested that the storm underscored the fact that the rail system and the transportation network are “absolutely essential to the region’s economic vitality. What we demonstrated to the people of the nation and Congress is how well New York, New Jersey and Connecticut worked together. We were all speaking [with one voice] – interconnected and interagency. We know we can fix what was broken. The measure of how good an agency or the industry is, are the professionals who work for us.

“We are all responsible for this stewardship. It’s the responsibility of engineering and construction management firms, and young women coming forward with solutions. We’re living in a changing climate and we have to make improvements to our system.”

Event volunteers: Elizabeth Federico; Gretchen Minneman; Stephanie Camay; Alexa Gangemi; and Jennifer Fogliano. ■
**Corporate Partner Spotlight**

**URS Corporation** (URS) is proud to support WTS’ mission to create new opportunities and advancement for women in the transportation industry as a Champion Corporate Sponsor at the WTS International level and President Corporate Partner at the local Greater New York chapter. In addition, several URS employees have been involved with WTS in various capacities, including committee membership, committee chairs, board members and the mentoring program.

URS is a fully integrated engineering, construction, and technical services organization with the capabilities to support every stage of the project life cycle – from inception through start-up and operation to decommissioning and closure. With over 54,000 employees worldwide, URS offers planning, architectural and engineering design, environment, construction, and program management, operations and maintenance, and management services. With operations in 50 countries and an established presence in major cities in the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Asia-Pacific, URS’ comprehensive skills and expertise are a valued resource to clients around the world.

The New York office at One Penn Plaza is URS’ flagship northeast center of operations, serving the tri-state area and supported by offices throughout the region. With more than 850 employees, the New York office designs and manages some of the City’s largest, most complex projects, including the LaGuardia Airport Redevelopment Program, LIRR East Side Access, Brooklyn Bridge Rehabilitation, St. George Ferry Terminal and the Webster Avenue Select Bus Service. In the region, URS is known for its dedication to quality and excellence as evidenced by our award-winning projects and service.

To learn more about URS’ excellent services, visit www.urs.com or contact WTS-GNY member Gill Mosseri, vice president, at gill.mosseri@urs.com or 212-896-0112.

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Members in the News

Stephanie Camay, WTS-GNY secretary and a transportation planner, recently joined Parsons Brinckerhoff after almost seven years at URS. Prior to joining the board, Stephanie served as the NY Programs Committee co-chair and an apprentice in the 2011 Mentoring Program.

Janet Jenkins, a WTS-GNY member and an AICP, PP, senior project manager in Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc.’s (VHB) New York City office, recently earned her New Jersey Professional Planner (NJPP) certification. To earn this certification, Jenkins had to pass an examination on New Jersey Planning Law and possess her AICP. The NJPP certification will provide the opportunity to offer planning expertise to private sector clients and local governments, as well as allow VHB to lead additional projects as the prime consultant where NJPP licenses are required as part of the RFP.

Janice Li recently became WTS-GNY Corporate Relations Committee chair. She had been the Nomination chair since 2008 and was a mentor in the Mentoring program for three years. Janice is a principal project manager responsible for project delivery and business development at CH2M HILL.

Shajira Mason, an electrical engineer in the Mechanical and Electrical Group at Parsons Brinckerhoff, recently became WTS-GNY Special Events Committee co-chair. As a new member she served in the Transportation YOU Committee-Aviation Futures, her favorite WTS initiative and a unique program aimed at teenage girls. She also serves in the Women in Engineering group for the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Region 1 Communications Section.

Program Note

Transportation Trivia 2013 was a huge success! Over 100 young transportation professionals came to Amity Hall on March 5th from the New York chapters of WTS, the Young Professionals in Transportation (YPT) and American Planning Association (APA). Questions ranged across all modes and geographies with a slight bias (of course) on New York. Did you know that in 1964, a law was passed to paint NYC taxi cabs yellow? While the CHUDS made a return appearance again this year, they were de-throned by the Department of Transformation, whose team members each received an autographed copy of Grand Central: Gateway to a Million Lives by Maxinne Leighton and John Belle. The planning committee and event volunteers consisted of: Emma Chapman (Parsons Brinckerhoff, WTS YP chair, and YPT vice-chair for Marketing, Sponsorship, and Communications), Wes Sternberg (North Hempstead Planning Department, APA), Stephanie Camay (Parsons Brinckerhoff, WTS secretary, YPT vice-chair for Administration), Lewis Thorwaldson (NYCT, APA NYC Transportation Committee), Alex Gore (Parsons Brinckerhoff, YPT), Amy Kaufman (NYCT, WTS Communications chair), Max Sokol (Parsons Brinckerhoff, WTS, APA NYC section representative), Marla Weinstein (Parsons Brinckerhoff/Columbia University, YPT), Pippa Brashear (Parsons Brinckerhoff, APA NYC Transportation Committee), Manasvi Menon (Parsons Brinckerhoff, YPT, WTS), and Amy Ford Wagner (Parsons Brinckerhoff, APA NYC Transportation Committee).
Finding Personal and Professional Satisfaction

BY AMY V. KAUFMAN

The writer is the WTS-GNY Communications Committee chair and senior director, Program Analysis and Management in NYCT’s Dept. of Subways Office of Capital Project Administration.

Sometimes, it is empowering and reassuring to hear unconventional stories of how women arrived at senior management positions. WTS members gathered on a cold winter’s evening to hear such stories from Deidre Taylor, a general superintendent for New York City Transit’s (NYCT) Stations Environment division, and Deborah Howes, a director of Community Planning for AECOM. WTS-GNY Vice President (NY) Linda Travis introduced the speakers and asked them to talk about their backgrounds for a few minutes, then shaped the fascinating discussion with a set of thought-provoking questions.

Deidre Taylor began her career with NYCT in 1985 as an hourly employee. She has steadily moved up through the ranks. She was promoted to station supervisor in 1988. Her management jobs required being on call 24/7, which often meant missing her three children’s parent-teacher conferences, sporting events and recitals. Nonetheless, Taylor stuck with it as she enjoys her job and the opportunities it provides, both to improve the customer experience in stations and to create a safe, high morale workplace for her employees. The group was impressed with Taylor’s determination and the sacrifices she made for her career. She said that she follows her 10-year rule: if she thinks that in 10 years she will regret a decision then she doesn’t do it.

Deborah Howes specialized in community-based land-use and transportation planning about 20 years ago. Prior to her move to AECOM in 2007, Howes worked for the Bureau of Planning in Portland, OR, where she received her master’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning at Portland State University. She began her career journey as an actor, working in television and film. She has held an eclectic list of jobs over the years, including a stint as the first female limousine driver in New York City. Howes emphasized that she found good mentors along her career path and that she now takes time to mentor others. Her advice is to value networking and to choose to work with people one likes.

Asked to offer “words of wisdom” for the early and mid-career professionals sitting around the conference table, both women smiled and despite their very different work experiences, their answers had a similar theme. “You should keep an open mind,” Taylor emphasized. “You may find another area [of interest] that you may excel in.” She continued that each of us should “develop people and they will support you.” Howes agreed and added that each of us should “do one thing really, really well.” Howes stressed the importance of stepping up and volunteering on other projects when deadlines approach and to become known as willing to go the extra mile.

The forum concluded with a discussion of handling disappointment in one’s career and then the workshop participants had a chance to network and exchange ideas about coping with workplace challenges. On a final note, Howes reminded everyone to learn from experience and be smarter next time. Good advice for all aspects of one’s life!

Event volunteers: Deborah Siegel Baker; Christina Adidjaja; Linda Travis; Amy V. Kaufman; Elizabeth Federico; Deborah Howes; and Deirdre Taylor.

WTS members exchanged ideas on coping with workplace challenges; the importance of networking; and the work/life balance.
Entrepreneurship Workshop: Small Business Success Stories

BY: LINDA TRAVIS

The writer is the WTS-GNY vice president (NY) and a superintendent in NYCT’s Transit Survey Unit Division of Operations Planning.

On March 20th, the Professional Development subcommittee of the NY Programs Committee hosted the second in a series of seminars designed to reach members who have expressed an interest in learning about starting their own business. The featured speaker was Kim Haas, president of Haas Media LLC, a successful W/MBE, and a dynamic personality with a fascinating story to share.

This set of seminars follows three held over the last year in which the focus was navigating one’s career, typically in a corporate setting. Selected speakers from the transportation industry volunteered their time to discuss their experiences with us.

Among the experts were Patrick Smith, senior director of Human Resources at New York City Transit (NYCT), STV’s Alexandra Tosi and Neil Carfagna, who serve as director of Talent Acquisition and vice president for Human Resources and Compliance, Metro-North Railroad (MNR) Vice President of Human Resources and Diversity Gregory Bradley, and two extraordinary women of distinction, AECOM Director of Community Planning Deborah Howes and NYCT General Superintendent Deidre Taylor.

The initial series of small, but highly successful workshops, covered topics ranging from learning what recruiters really seek in a candidate; how to avoid common interview pitfalls; and crafting a truly professional resume. Subsequent sessions addressed issues of strategy, methods to interpret one’s work environment and how to maneuver around certain career disasters. At the end, Howes and Taylor helped us to assess quality-of-life issues and to help determine the level of satisfaction attainable in any given scenario. Attendees left with a valuable perspective on the importance of a good balance among the many aspects of life as a working woman, regardless of circumstances and approach.

As the second series begins, we offered the audience a first-hand account by the business owner Haas of the steps she took to position herself and her idea in the marketplace. As she described the tools and resources from which she drew to embark on this journey, all could imagine the fear and exhilaration that the experience must have engendered. While understanding that not all first business ventures must be terrifying, it was a true and vivid account of one person’s quest to follow a dream. Although most agree that the concept of living one’s dream is appealing, the cold, hard realities associated with the undertaking to achieve that goal can be daunting. WTS members were gratified to hear how Haas dealt with the challenges and how she continues to do so as she grows her business.

Based on enthusiastic feedback, this members-only benefit series will strive to provide information on issues and trends throughout the transportation realm. For additional information, contact WTS-GNY Programs/Professional Development (NY) Co-Chair Elizabeth Federico. More seminars are planned for this series, watch for notification of the next one in the Community Buzz.

Event volunteers: Elizabeth Federico and Kim Haas.
Public-Private Partnerships: Meeting New Jersey’s Infrastructure Needs

BY COLLEEN CONNOLLY

The writer is a WTS-GNY Programs (NJ) Committee member and an associate at Malick & Scherer.

On March 28th, the New Jersey Program Committee was pleased to present “Public-Private Partnerships – Moving NJ Transportation Forward.” In light of the ongoing Hurricane Sandy rebuilding effort, which caused this program to be rescheduled from the fall, and the recent media buzz regarding sequestering and federal budget worries, this presentation was very timely. It delved into public-private partnerships (P3) as an innovative solution to both budgetary concerns and meeting the needs of New Jersey’s aging infrastructure.

WTS-GNY President Mary K. Murphy welcomed the group and WTS-GNY Vice President (NJ) Beth DeAngelo opened the presentation and introduced the evening’s speakers. The panel discussion was moderated by Victoria Cross Kelly, vice president and Northeast Region Strategic Operations manager for Parsons Brinkerhoff. Kelly introduced the diverse panel of speakers. The first speaker was Deborah Brown-Davis, the Strategic Team leader for FHWA’s Office of Innovative Program Delivery. Brown-Davis spoke about the exciting new guidance for P3s that FHWA will be posting on its website in May. This guidance will provide support to agencies in using P3 successfully and in developing P3 contracts. Brown-Davis recommended that agencies seek the guidance of consultants to ensure that the decision to utilize P3 is fiscally beneficial. This offered a perfect segue to the second speaker. Jeffery Parker, Strategic Team leader, senior director for Ernst & Young Infrastructure, is one of the nation’s leading advisors on P3s and financial planning for transportation projects. He discussed the innovative ways that P3 can be employed to finance transportation projects and also share the financial risks with the private sector. Parker provided real-world examples of P3 triumphs gained from his experience on projects such as the Port of Miami Tunnel and I-595. Currently, he also leads the financial advisory team for the Tappen Zee Bridge replacement.

The final speaker was Peter Garino. As chief of Capital Programming and Administration for NJ Transit (NJT), Garino manages the agency’s $25 billion capital program. He highlighted some of NJT’s success stories utilizing P3s for large-scale improvements such as the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail and the River Line. In addition, Garino discussed the use of P3s to cover operational aspects, such as bus line services.

After several spirited questions from the audience of approximately 50 people, everyone walked away with a diverse perspective and better understanding of public-private partnerships in general and their specific applications in New Jersey.

The event was arranged by the NJ Programs Committee chaired by Polina Knaster. A special thanks to the evening’s dinner sponsors KS Engineers and Malick & Scherer, P.C.

Event volunteers: Polina Knaster; Ann Freedman; Liza Betz; Susan Boone; Beth DeAngelo; Pat Malles; Jud Wilde; Tam Sillick; Melissa Jiang; Joanne Stokes; and Elena Malfi.
A Warm Welcome to Our New Members!

The list reflects the new members who joined the chapter up until press time.

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