It has always been the mission of WTS-LA to build the future of transportation through the advancement of women. WTS-LA boldly took that charge and applied it to our strategies for our 2017-2018 Board. And if I didn’t know better, I’d think there were a thousand more of us. From workforce development to organizational bolstering to mentorship/scholarship efforts to outstanding advancements in committees like Transportation YOU, College Outreach, and Mentorship/Professional Development, WTS-LA members outdid themselves to make this a banner two years for their transportation industry contributions. WTS-LA began the task of mapping our goals that ultimately would lead to providing the opportunities for advancement, as well as opening the doors for new talent with unparalleled access to industry and government leaders.

Through targeted leadership, vision, innovation, determination, and dedication, we delivered on all fronts and I am just bursting with pride. You not only supported the mission and goals but made me look good. So, to all of the board members and volunteers, to each and every WTS-LA member, and to our sponsors, I thank you. Thank you for your stirring, dogged, informed, passionate, and entertaining contributions to an unforgettable and positive two years. We celebrate an organization that not only strives to engage and empower through leadership today but forges a future for tomorrow.

Thank you,
Kathy Simons
2017-2018 WTS-LA President

Read the WTS-LA white paper about Workforce Development, called “Bridging LA County’s Transportation Industry Workforce Gap: Where have all of the qualified people gone…and how do we get them back?” here. Click on the link or go to http://www.wtsinternational.org/losangeles/ to read this important paper.
Transportation YOU

Sometimes a YOU turn gets you exactly where you want to go. That’s what Transportation YOU co-chairs Tina Backstrom, Strategic Planning Manager for the Project Development and Coordination and Environmental Programs Group at Los Angeles World Airports, and Sharlaine Bailey, Foothill Transit Director of Facilities, discovered when they integrated WTS-LA's highly successful Adopt-A-School program with WTS International’s Transportation YOU program. Designed as an “interactive mentoring program that offers young girls ages 13-18 an introduction to a wide variety of transportation careers,” Transportation YOU helps young women gain understanding of the depth and breadth of transportation industry careers. But it also does much more. Transportation YOU provides active mentoring. So, young girls not only learn about careers, they have industry role models helping them find their path to those careers. Ms. Backstrom and Ms. Bailey launched more than eight successful Transportation YOU programs in 2017-2018. Programs ranged from presentations at Susan Miller Dorsey High School and Westchester High School on transportation careers, mentoring workshops, site tours, and hosting an Empowerment Day. This Empowerment Day career awareness event featured keynote speakers and workshops with transportation professionals. Wanting the girls to truly be engaged, Transportation YOU developed a comprehensive, dynamic, and far-ranging program to address workforce development disparities and issues. It was integrated as our central theme into nearly everything we did. WTS-LA helped make a difference in raising awareness about and creating solutions for workforce development in 2017-2018.

College Outreach

Under the leadership of Todd Nguyen, WSP Transportation and Environmental Planner and the 2017-2018 WTS-LA College Outreach Committee chair, the committee refocused and broadened their impact; building on the very successful Transportation Résumé Book (TRB) to create so much more. Believing the TRB committee was tied only to an annual publication, he wanted to expand and rename the committee to encompass comprehensive outreach to area colleges and young professionals. Hence, the College Outreach Committee. Through mixers, workshops, and other interactive events, the committee cast a very wide net, drawing in numerous students and entry-level transportation professionals and connecting them to seasoned industry professionals/WTS-LA members. The College Outreach Committee developed programs that fostered meaningful lessons and skills—from résumé building to interview skills to networking. But the benefits of the College Outreach Committee were not a one-way street. Industry professionals that participated in a College Outreach event remarked on how much they learned through teaching these young people. It also opened their eyes to the current concerns of the next generation of transportation professionals, giving them invaluable insights into everything from values to technology. In addition, these industry professionals also got a first look at rising young talent in the transportation industry. Naturally, the new and improved College Outreach program fit perfectly with WTS-LA president Kathy Simons’ overriding theme of workforce development. In fact, it addressed the issue at its core—bringing young people into the transportation industry and providing them with the skills they need to succeed. Mr. Nguyen described his committee’s mandate as “providing a necessary service to college students, young professionals, and the transportation industry itself.” Wanting to ensure the committee’s continued success at their new mission, Mr. Nguyen also established the necessary structure to ensure its commitment to that mandate moving forward.

Mentorship/Professional Development

Mentors are invaluable. Few would disagree. But ensuring an optimum experience for both a mentor and protégé is never simple. In 2017-2018, WTS-LA Project Design & Professional Development chair and Port of Los Angeles Civil Engineer Mahsa Hematabadi Pan, PE, and her committee took things to a new level. Designed to help WTS-LA members advance their careers through professional development, the Mentorship program pairs established industry mentors with rising transportation protégés. By all accounts, these two years proved extremely successful. In 2017, the committee focused on mid-career professionals and partnered them with WTS-LA Directors at Large. In 2018, the committee recruited entry-level professionals and paired them with more seasoned industry leaders. The WTS-LA Mentorship Program provides exceptional benefits for both mentors and protégés. The learning and exposure definitely goes both ways. Both mentors and protégés believed they gained tremendous knowledge and connection with everyone involved. But there was something different and special that occurred by focusing on these two cohorts – mid-career and entry-level professionals – during this period. The Mentorship Committee hosted panels with WTS-LA Directors at Large that imparted valuable career advice for professionals who had already advanced pretty far in their careers and a mid-career professionals panel, featuring a stellar lineup of WTS-LA members. It was an overwhelming success.

Both the mid-career professionals and the young professionals felt they gained from the year-long programs. And once again, this, too, fits perfectly into the chapter’s directive to focus on workforce development.
TWO YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS*

27 JANUARY
Welcome Los Angeles County Supervisor, Kathryn Barger

22 FEBRUARY
Welcome Los Angeles County Supervisor, Janice Hahn

08 MARCH
International Women’s Day Happy Hour

05 APRIL
Learning from Los Angeles World Airports featuring Cynthia Guidry, Samantha Bosick, Aura Moore, and Lydia Kennard

27 APRIL
College Outreach Networking Mixer with Corporate Sponsors

03 MAY
Office of Extraordinary Innovation with Chief Innovation Officer, Joshua Shank, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

05 MAY
Professional Development Book Club featuring Michelle T. Johnson, author of The Diversity Code

21 JUNE
State of Good Repair/Asset Management with the
• Fran Inman, Vice Chair, California Transportation Commission
• Roderick Diaz, Director of Planning and Development, Southern California Regional Rail Authority
• Kia Mertazaz, Executive Director of Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority
• Gregory Kildare, Chief Officer, Risk, Safety, & Asset Management, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

25 JULY
Welcome Port of Long Beach Executive Director, Mario Cordero

30 AUGUST
WTS-LA Mixes It Up Happy Hour

03 SEPTEMBER - 07 OCTOBER
WTS LA International Tour: London-Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Lyon

05 OCTOBER
SB 1 Funding Panel Discussion:
• Fran Inman, Vice Chair, California Transportation Commission
• Carrie Bowen, District 7 Director, California Department of Transportation
• John Walker, Assistant Deputy Director, Programs Development Division, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works
• Patricia Chen, Senior Director, State Legislative Analysis and Discretionary Grants, Countywide Planning & Development Department, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

09 NOVEMBER
Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner, Emcees:
• Annette Owens, Program Management/Regional Rail, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
• Timothy Lindhein, Executive Officer, Program Management, Capital Projects, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
• $71,000 in scholarships distributed!

11 APRIL
Breakfast with Theresa McMillan, Chief Planning Officer, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

11 JUNE
Rail Panel:
• Moderator: Noreen Jaks, PE, SE, Southern California California Engineering Manager and Statewide Complex Structures Manager, California High-Speed Rail Authority
• Jeanet Owens, PE, Senior Executive Officer - Program Management/Regional Rail, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
• Michelle Bonham, Southern California Regional Director, California High-Speed Rail Authority
• Kimberly Yu, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Planning Project & Delivery, Southern California Regional Rail Authority

14 MARCH
International Women’s Day Happy Hour

22 FEBRUARY
Welcome Los Angeles County Supervisor, Kathryn Barger

27 JANUARY
Corporate Sponsors

*Titles and agency/firm names reflect those of the date of the program.

A Tour de Workforce for LA County’s Future

On July 27, 2018, WTS-LA hosted a panel of experts from some of Southern California’s largest transportation agencies to discuss a looming crisis for our industry - the imminent retirement of a large percentage of the current workforce - especially those in leadership and management positions - and the need to develop those coming up behind them with the skills to take on their roles in the near future. Providing historical context and expert opinion, the panel dove deep into defining the present challenge and offering innovative solutions. Comprised of professionals in the transportation trenches, and reading like a who’s who in Southern California transportation, they included:

• Laura Friedman, California State Assemblywoman, District 43
• Marianne Hill, Executive Director, Propet LA-Countywide Strategic Plan, Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation
• Gregg Irish, Executive Director, Workforce Investment Board, City of Los Angeles
• Rosanna D’Antonio, PE, GE, EnvSP, Deputy Director for Development Services and Emergency Management, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works
• Miguel Cabral, Executive Officer, Diversity and Economic Opportunity, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
• Lou Anne Byrum, President, Board of Harbor Commissioners, City of Long Beach
• Avin Sharma, Director of Labor Relations and Workforce Investment, Port of Los Angeles
• Cynthia Guidry, PE, Director of Long Beach Airport

Without question, these women and men will help the transportation industry in Southern California address the workforce gap issue. Their experience, dexterous intelligence, and ingenuity promise to advance solutions that will serve us all for years to come. In fact, WTS-LA took the information learned during this exceptional program and through additional research and developed a white paper about the issue, called “Bringing LA County’s Transportation Industry Workforce Gap: Where have all of the qualified people gone… and how do we get them back?” which is available now for your review here. Click on the link or go to http://www.wtsinternational.org/losangeles/ to read this important paper.
2017
Ribeka Toda, UCLA, Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($10,000)
Vanessa Faul, CSU Northridge, Ava Doner Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($10,000)
Hue-Tam Jamme, USC, Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($7,500)
Camila Salomon Gnecco, USC, Ava Doner Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($7,500)
Younsook "Audrey" Jang, Pomona College, SCAG/Arup Scholarship ($5,000)
Lauren Deaderick, USC, Lawrence D. Hazzard Transportation Leadership Scholarship ($5,000)
EliseAnne Koskelo, Pomona College, Louise K. Garside LKG-CMC Undergraduate Scholarship ($5,000)
Tiffany Chu, UCLA, Louise K. Garside LKG-CMC Graduate Scholarship ($5,000)
Ashelin Savage, University of La Verne, WTS-LA Board of Directors Scholarship ($3,000)
Evelyn Park, CSU Long Beach, WTS-LA Board of Directors Scholarship ($3,000)
Radin Rahimzadeh, USC, AECOM Richard G. Newman Scholarship ($2,500)
Thaiiya Thomas, Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnet, Joan G Wood Memorial Scholarship ($2,500)
Cai Ford, Westchester High School, WTS-Marilyn J. Reece Memorial Scholarship ($2,500)
Kimberly Navarro, Dorsey STEM Magnet, WSP Bright Futures Scholarship ($2,500)

2018
Hannah Rae King, UCLA, Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($10,000)
Joceline Suhaimi, UCLA, Ava Doner Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($10,000)
Miriam Pirsiki, UCLA, Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($8,500)
Emma Banker, Pitzen College, Ava Doner Memorial Graduate Scholarship ($7,500)
Emily Ng, Pitzen College, Jacobs Undergraduate Scholarship ($5,000)
Clare Blackwell, Scripps College, Access Services Undergraduate Scholarship ($5,000)
Esther Kala, Cal Poly Pomona, BYD “Build Your Dreams WTS-LA” Scholarship ($5,000)
Cassie Hallis, UCLA, Stantec Graduate Scholarship ($5,000)
Lynnette Guzman, USC, Louise K. Garside LKG-CMC Graduate Scholarship ($5,000)
Tina Backstrom, PE, Grand Canyon University, WTS-LA Board of Directors Graduate Scholarship ($5,000)
Marissa Renteria, Los Angeles Trade Tech College, SCAG Community College Scholarship ($5,000)
Melissa Ignacio, Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnet, WTS-Marilyn J. Reece Memorial Scholarship ($4,500)
Kristene Loaiza, Dorsey Law & Public Service Magnet, WTS-Joan G. Wood Memorial Scholarship ($4,500)
Mia Ford, Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnets, CM Solutions ($2,500)
Benedicta Huletey, Dorsey STEM Magnet, Berg & Associates, Inc. ($2,500)
Kala Neighbors, Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnet, WSP Bright Futures Scholarship ($2,500)
Malia Williams, Dorsey STEM Magnet, AECOM Richard G. Newman Scholarship ($2,500)

2017
Emcees: Jeanet Owens, PE, Senior Executive Officer - Program Management/Regional Rail, and Timothy Lindholm, Executive Officer - Program Management, Capital Projects, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Woman of the Year - Julie Allen, City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering
Employer of the Year - Mott MacDonald
Honorable Ray LaHood Award - Phillip Washington, Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Rosa Parks Diversity Award - Los Angeles World Airports
Member of the Year - Elizabeth Ramirez, Director of Government Affairs, Athens Services
Innovative Transportation Solutions Award - LAX Northside Plan Update

2018
Emcees: Allison Yoh, Director of Transportation Planning Port of Long Beach, and Gary Lee Moore, City Engineer for the City of Los Angeles
Woman of the Year - Nadine Lee, Chief of Staff, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Employer of the Year - City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering
Honorable Ray LaHood Award - Eric Shen, Director, Mid-Pacific Gateway Office. Maritime Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation
Rosa Parks Diversity Award - Carrie Bowen, California Highway and Roads Leader, HDR
Member of the Year - Todd Nguyen, Deputy Project Manager, WSP
Innovative Transportation Solutions Award - TIE between the Micro Transit Pilot Project (Metro) and the Universal College Transit Pass (U-Pass) Pilot Program (Metro, Footlight Transit, Long Beach Transit, Torrance Transit, and Gardena Transit)
The WTS-LA chapter is growing and increasing scholarships and efficiencies. Our net income has increased five-fold in about five years, and the scholarship amount has tripled. WTS-LA owes an enormous debt of gratitude to our corporate sponsors. Not only do they provide critical funding and sponsorship for our events and programs, they also populate the chapter with generous, caring, compassionate transportation industry professionals and just wonderful all-around people. It is through this indelible combination of giving that we can fulfill our mission to advance women in the transportation industry. And for this, we are most grateful.