

Mary McCormick Excels in Public Displays of Connection



Mary McCormick (MBI Media), Photo © John Livzey, 2016

Communication is a tool. And in the hands of a craftsman, it can be an extremely effective tool. But how a communicator uses it is just as telling as the user's level of skill and expertise. Mary McCormick is an expert craftsman, and she created MBI Media to apply that expertise to advance projects and keep the public well informed.

"At the heart of our company is the principle of helping people communicate with each other. That's what we do at its essence," explains McCormick. "Our main purpose is to be the conduit of information that helps people understand why a bridge or a light-rail station or a maintenance facility is not only necessary, but beneficial to a community. And we found a place in the transportation world where we can help people communicate to foster a better quality of life through the implementation of essential infrastructure. I often joke that we're the WD-40 of projects."

With a focus on *what* they're communicating as much as *how*, McCormick and MBI Media strive to bring focus to the human side of the infrastructure equation through communication and public outreach. They see themselves as a differentiator in visually imparting critical information to help make projects more successful and better understood. While emphasizing community relations and public affairs, McCormick also points out the value of technical savvy.



"Audiences are much more sophisticated and video literate than they used to be. So we make a concerted effort to take it to the next level by visually educating and informing our audiences. We have four in-house studios. And with those studios, we have greatly enhanced capabilities. I was a camerawoman at ABC for many years, a producer at NBC Nightly News, and a PBS documentary producer, so that level of experience and professionalism formed the culture in my company so that we could quickly and regularly turn around high quality products."

On the client side, McCormick offers helpful advice for owners to get the best bang for their communications buck.

"Public agency owners and even construction and engineering companies should integrate community relations professionals from the very *beginning* of a project. This helps us provide information way in advance of construction or design, to let people know what's coming. Too many times we're not brought in until the very end. Bring us in early and let us help you make that project successful."



Evidently, her philosophy works. MBI Media's client list reads like a who's who of business and transportation in Southern California. MBI Media's clients include California High-Speed Rail Authority, Link Union Station (Link US), Amtrak, Alameda Corridor East Construction Authority, Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority, Bovis Lend Lease, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Caltrans, CH2M, Foothill Transit, Hensel Phelps Construction Company, Jacobs, LACCD, LAUSD, Metro, Metrolink, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Orange County Transportation Authority, Parsons, Parsons Brinckerhoff, the Port of Long Beach, the Port of Los Angeles, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, Union Pacific, and of course, WTS-LA.

Naturally, MBI's roster of projects is equally impressive. They include the High-Speed Rail Palmdale-Burbank Section, Link Union Station (Link US), PR/ED SR 55 Improvement Project from the I-5 to the SR 91, the Shoemaker Bridge Replacement Project, the Long Beach Civic Center Project, the Alameda Corridor East, the All-American Canal Lining Project, the Clark County Regional Justice Center (Las Vegas, NV), the Interstate 15 Corridor Improvement Project, the Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center, the Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport Terminal Area Improvement Program, the Port of Los Angeles C-Street/Interstate 110 Access Ramp Improvements, the State Route 91 Corridor Improvement Project, the Riverside County Transportation Commission Grade Separations Video, and the SR-710 Conversations Project.

With all of these clients and on all of these projects, being in on the start of endeavors is a hallmark for McCormick. The same is true with her WTS experience. She attended and was a supporter of the very first national conference in Los Angeles. She also served as president of WTS Orange County. But she considers WTS-LA her home chapter.



"We have an office in downtown LA and we're celebrating more than 25 years in transportation. WTS-LA was one of the very first organizations that allowed us to see transportation as a very important market and industry for us. But as many have said before me, the most amazing thing about WTS-LA is the access to decision makers the chapter provides. If you're in WTS and you call someone else in WTS—even if you don't know them—they take the call. That is invaluable. If you want to grow your business and really advance transportation, you definitely need to be in WTS."

Photos of Ms. McCormick working with project stakeholders are courtesy of MBI Media.