

Rosa Brice and Rebecca Kalauskas Want You to Know What Others Are Missing



Rosa Brice (Los Angeles World Airports Senior Airport Engineer) and Rebecca Kalauskas (WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff Lead Planner and Membership chair), Photos © John Livzey, 2016

People join professional associations for many reasons. Many individuals enroll because they just want to advance their careers. But joining WTS Los Angeles is different. While women and men certainly become members to get ahead professionally, they also want to help realize WTS's mission to advance women in transportation and level the transportation playing field. In joining WTS-LA, though, people also discover a multitude of additional benefits that serve them for the rest of their lives.

"There is something for everyone, no matter where you are in your career," explains Rosa Brice (above left), Los Angeles World Airports Senior Airport Engineer and WTS-LA 2nd Vice President (Membership). "Students gain valuable contacts and insights into internships and full-time jobs. Entry-level and mid-level professionals have the opportunity for meaningful professional development, and formal and informal mentoring at a level that isn't available through any other organization. Executives and governmental leaders have the opportunity to network with other leaders as well as giving back to make the road easier for others to travel."



WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff Lead Planner and Membership chair Rebecca Kalauskas (above right) agrees that WTS-LA provides unique advantages, but she calls out one particular advantage as the chapter's defining element.

"The biggest benefit of WTS-LA membership is access, access to senior-level transportation industry professionals. But access goes both ways. So senior people also gain access to the best and brightest young and mid-career professionals. Being able to network across industry disciplines and across professional levels the way you can in WTS-LA is unparalleled in the transportation industry and probably well beyond it. The relationships that you develop in that context are exceptionally valuable, both

professionally and personally. In addition, we have outstanding mentoring and professional development programs that particularly help entry-level and mid-level professionals who are looking to develop their skills and find their path forward. It really is a place that provides great benefits for everyone at every level.”

Member benefits like these are incomparable. But they are by no means the only benefits the chapter provides. Meaningful monthly programs bring industry leaders to present about cutting-edge projects, policy, and legislation. WTS-LA members routinely find themselves on one-of-a-kind preview tours of local infrastructure. Entry-level and mid-level professionals gain invaluable, on-the-job leadership experience through active participation on committees and at events. And members secure immediate access to an international network of transportation professionals, one that is noted for responding promptly to a phone call or email. But in more practical terms, how do these types of benefits help individuals?

“I had worked in various departments in the City of Los Angeles for several years and was having difficulty getting promoted,” explains Brice. “So I decided to pursue a career in transportation. Mid-career, I transferred to LAWA. My LAWA division manager was a WTS-LA member. Realizing I was new to transportation, she suggested I join the chapter. But I was skeptical at first. So, I attended several events and I started to notice the large number of high-level executives and government leaders that were at each event. But they were not just in attendance; they didn’t show up and leave. They actively participated at each and every function. I was able to meet many transportation professionals and leaders that I just didn’t have access to prior to WTS-LA. And I began to create my lifelong professional network.”

Though anecdotal, Brice’s story illustrates how the chapter benefits its members. Of course, both she and Kalauskas stress active participation in the chapter to optimize its offerings.

“Right now, membership is holding steady,” says Kalauskas. “But we have several upcoming members-only events that we believe will help raise awareness about the value of chapter membership and participation. And we build on each event.”

“Through these events we look to make more transportation professionals aware of WTS-LA and the benefits that differentiate it from other organizations,” says Brice. “And we work hard in several ways to make sure that happens. At each event, we try to increase awareness of WTS-LA and its benefits to prospective members by simply showing them what the chapter offers. They usually join on the spot. We also propose topics and speakers that we believe will provide insight into major projects with opportunities for potential clients and employers. That attracts even more transportation people to the chapter. On a more mundane level, I personally invite professionals to events and make sure that they are introduced to other WTS-LA members.”

People join professional associations for many reasons. Mostly, though, people want to advance their careers. In joining WTS-LA, transportation professionals can do exactly that. But by becoming chapter members, they also avail themselves of a whole host of advantages that no other organization can provide.