

Samantha Bricker: Bringing Rail to Santa Monica with Authority



Samantha Bricker (Chief Executive Officer for the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority), Photos © John Livzey, 2016

Transit has the power to transform lives, both individually and *en masse*. And Samantha Bricker earned a front-row seat in helping transit do just that. Bricker serves as Chief Executive Officer for the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority, a single-purpose agency tasked with building the Expo light-rail line from downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica. With Phase 1 (from downtown to Culver City) complete and exceeding ridership projections, Bricker and much of Los Angeles eagerly anticipated the recent opening of Phase 2. But for Bricker it has even greater meaning.

“I used to handle transportation policy for County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who was a member of the Metro board. Expo was in the planning stage at the time. State Senator Sheila Kuehl wanted to form an agency similar to the Pasadena Blue Line Authority to build the project, and they needed someone to implement it. So I was tasked with forming the agency and implementing the line. “When the Authority was first created we had to hit the ground running, so before design even began on the project, I had to find office space, hire a staff, develop policies and procedures, and even create a logo for the agency. For the past 10 years I have overseen government and community relations, Human Resources, environmental planning, procurement, budget, real estate, small business, and local hire policies for both Phase 1 and Phase 2. We have turned Phase 2 over to Metro and it opened May 20, 2016. So I was there at the beginning and we have now started the close out process and will shutdown the Authority in the next several months. It’s really been a fantastic project.



“I think we’ve reached a tipping point in LA. Before, it was hard to get folks to ride a subway or light rail line; people loved their cars too much. But now people are embracing transit. In addition, Phase 2 benefited from Measure R (a voter-approved, transportation-dedicated, half-cent sales tax). That says a lot about the population and their willingness to support transit. Today, wherever we go, people are so excited about the line opening. People *do* want to get out of their cars. Recently my husband and I went to dinner in Santa Monica and the traffic was horrible. And my husband said, ‘We’re not coming back here until your line opens!’”

Bricker credits Metro's prescience in buying up abandoned railroad rights-of-way making Expo financially feasible today. But prescience and persistence played another important role in her professional life.

"I had a friend, Lia Reyes, on the WTS-LA board. She was very involved in the small business component of WTS-LA and I oversee small business issues for the project. She said that I should really be on the WTS-LA board. So she pushed it and I spoke at one of her events and then she nominated me. It's been a great experience. I've met fantastic women. And I've gotten much more involved in the organization. This year, I've become very active in the professional development arena, working with that committee and organizing events in our office. And I'm encouraging women in our office to join the chapter to network and gain inspiration from women in leadership positions in our area. Working as a director-at-large and helping where I can has been very fulfilling. I'm really glad she pushed me to do it."