

## Kathy McClure's First President's Letter Spells Out ABCs of Her Agenda



*Kathy McClure (2017 WTS-LA Chapter President), Photo © John Livzey, 2017*

Trailblazing computer scientist and Rear Admiral Grace Hopper said, “The most damaging phrase in the English language is, ‘It’s always been done that way.’” She would know. She detested doctrinaire thinking and thoughtless action. But she also recognized and respected the value of experience. I could not agree more with her philosophy.

These are uncertain times. And change seems to be the order of the day. But change for the sake of change does not necessarily produce a net positive. So, with Grace Hopper in mind, I become president of WTS-LA with this working philosophy in mind. We must look at what we do and how we do things with a fresh, new perspective. We are a very successful, extraordinary WTS chapter. We have a wealth of experience in everything from outstanding programs to innovative membership benefits to wholly unique participatory events. But we must find other ways to move the needle and advance change. So, I want to use what works, but I also want to take a fresh look at those things we need to re-evaluate to ensure we are fully achieving our mission. While I plan on examining virtually every aspect of what we do, there are two specific areas that will be a focus from the get-go.

As many of you know, women comprise 50.8 percent of the US workforce. Yet only 20 percent of engineering school graduates are women, only 11 percent stay engineers. Architects fare little better. Fully 50 percent of architectural school graduates are women, but only 18 percent remain in the profession. In construction firms, only 9 percent of the workforce are women. But we’ve all seen these numbers before, or numbers like them. We all know the problem, but the question remains: what should we do about it?

*Workforce development* through WTS-LA is one critical answer. So, I will carefully examine what we’ve done in the past and work with you, our committees, and our board to develop new strategies for the future. This includes collaborating with our local agency partners and industry associations to forge a unified workforce initiative to meet today’s needs as well as the imminent requirements of tomorrow. And those requirements are real. From the significant capital projects already underway to prospective ones from LA Metro and LAWA, the potential of the Olympics, and many more, Los Angeles County needs a diversified workforce. We will be reaching out to many of you to help advance this mission in very specific and meaningful ways over the next two years.

Next, we will revisit *access*. WTS and WTS-LA pride ourselves on providing unparalleled access, access that cannot be found in any other organization. We should be proud. WTS-LA membership provides unique connection to more than 6,500 transportation professionals. And when someone from WTS calls, we answer. That is extraordinary. But it is not enough. If there is one single element that can truly help level the playing field, it is access. So, once again, I will review everything we do as a chapter through the

prism of how it enhances meaningful access to transportation leaders for you, our members, as well as our future generation of transportation professionals through WTS-LA programs including Adopt-A-School, scholarships, mentor/protégé, professional development, and small business outreach. But this, too, is not a one-way street. So, I strongly encourage you to rethink your efforts and participation in terms of advancing access. Have an interesting idea that brings transportation leadership into the chapter? I want to hear it.

Again, workforce development and enriched access are two elements that will receive the most attention at the outset. But that is by no means a complete agenda. *Everything* is on the table. And I look to improve membership collaboration so that cross-pollinated ideas and integrated, holistic efforts can advance the chapter in ways we can't even conceive of right now. This is no small order. But that is the task we have before us today. And we must all rise to this challenge.

"The most damaging phrase in the English language is: 'It's always been done that way.'" In WTS-LA, that phrase no longer exists. And here is what we will do. We will honor the women and men that came before us in the chapter and build on their exemplary work. And we will create innovative solutions that will significantly advance women in transportation. The stakes could not be higher, but that will make our successes that much more fulfilling. In that regard, I want to thank and congratulate outgoing president Amanda Heinke and the entire 2015-2016 board for their tireless work and stellar advancements. I look forward to working with our 2017-2018 board, and all of you, as together we look for the innovations and solutions to the challenges we face.

Thank you all for your support.

Kathy McClure