

Lisa Levy Buch is Comms, Cool, and Respected



Lisa Levy (Chief Communication officer for Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority), Photos © John Livzey, 2017

As the chief communication officer for Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority, Lisa Levy Buch oversees all agency communications, community outreach, and its media relations program. But that is the 30,000-foot view of a complex and dynamic communications program.

“The agency I work for is quite unique. It was created to plan, design, and build this one light rail line. Once completed, we go out of business. So, we have a singular mission that allows us to be wholly focused on the communities we serve and to be out in front of the project at all phases—from planning to design to construction. We just broke ground on the next six-station segment, but we’ve been working on the project for more than a decade. And in that time, we’ve built close relationships with the community, elected officials, and the cities. And the foundation for our relationship-building is the agency’s communications program.” Buch would know.

A 30-year communications veteran with a background in environmental and transportation planning, she’s worked in all areas of transportation; on both the public and private sides and with elected officials. During her career, she’s worked on the planning for many controversial projects throughout the region, efforts where the opposition was considerable. She notes, though, that with the Gold Line, things are different.

“We’re very fortunate with the Gold Line. The cities and the communities are supportive and, there’s great anticipation for the line to continue to be built. Being able to bring a new transportation option to folks that always thought they’d have to be stuck in their cars is a very welcome and positive thing, and especially fulfilling, because our agency is out in front of the project, communicating at every step. Of course, building it can present challenges. So, I’m proud that we’ve earned the support of the community. I credit our CEO, Habib Balian, who believes that



people should not be surprised by construction or plans and understands that building support can only happen with good communication. His grassroots approach allows my team and I to be proactive and

engaged at all levels, from the community to elected officials. That kind of support and leadership is invaluable.”

Buch also believes in another kind of support, one she has received for a long time from WTS.

“I was on the board of WTS Inland Empire for many years and found a great group of people devoted to supporting and educating our industry on issues important to transportation professionals. I became an advisor when I took the job with the Construction Authority eight years ago. Just recently, I was asked to serve as a Director at Large in WTS-LA and I was honored to join. WTS is really quite a unique organization. It’s a group that brings together important people with a focus on emerging issues in our industry and specifically to encourage women to participate in a field that has historically been male dominated. To be able to support women in that context is just a wonderful cause. It may not seem as important now, as we no longer have to imagine women in leadership positions in transportation; we see it all around us. But when I started 30 years ago, I was often the only woman in the room. WTS-LA played and continues to play a critical role in inspiring and supporting women to bring their talents to our region and our industry. I am thrilled to help in whatever way I can to support that mission.”