

Heather Anderson: Presenting Our Future One Program at a Time



Heather Anderson (WTS-LA Programs Committee co-chair), Photos © John Livzey, 2018

Famed Nobel Laureate physicist Dennis Gabor said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” In a world where the future seems to be invading the present virtually every other minute, CH2M (now Jacobs) transportation engineer and WTS-LA Programs Committee co-chair Heather Anderson, PE, is doing her part to help create the future of the transportation industry, as well as her own.

“It’s always busy, and sometimes there just aren’t enough hours in the day for everything that needs to get done, but that doesn’t mean you ever stop trying to do it all,” she explains. “I’m a transportation engineer, but I’m currently serving as the deputy project manager on the I-710 South Early Action Soundwall Program from the Pacific Coast Highway to State Route 91, which takes up the majority of my time. I’m also working on the SR-710 North Environmental Study Project Report. These are only two of my major projects. While project deliverables and keeping projects on schedule takes precedence overall, I’m also collaborating on several pursuits as well. My days are very full and...I’m tackling my to-do list one item at a time.”

But dynamic changes are not only happening on the 710 freeway corridor.

“In addition, Los Angeles is a very hot market right now for transportation. With the transportation tax ballot measures (M and R) that passed, there is guaranteed transportation funding, providing even more opportunity in that regard. This is really a unique time in a unique place for transportation.”

There has been one constant, however, throughout Ms. Anderson’s career.

“I first got involved with WTS when I won an undergraduate scholarship through the Orange County chapter. After college, I began my career with CH2M, working with Melissa de la Peña and Michelle Boehm, who got me involved with the Los Angeles chapter. At the time, CH2M was a Platinum sponsor, and they have always been supportive of the chapter and of their employees’ involvement in the chapter. In 2016, I contacted then-chapter-president Amanda Heinke and she helped facilitate my role on the Programs Committee.

“I remember when I first started on Programs I was a little overwhelmed. There’s so much that goes on behind the scenes and coordination for just one program. Now, it’s become a lot more streamlined and you get used to the process once you know how it works. There are also many volunteers that help make things happen. What I bring to the table are my communication skills and organization through detailed coordination. I always follow through, and that’s proven very helpful to the committee.”



Ms. Anderson, her co-chair, and committee members have been recognized for providing compelling, unique, and timely programs. That's no accident.

"We want to let our members and attendees know what's going on in Los Angeles, what projects are going on now and in the future. Those are the speakers we bring in." The Programs Committee is also helping the chapter fulfill another important need.

Currently, WTS LA is putting together a workforce initiative, as there simply aren't enough people who understand what needs

to be done in transportation. By reaching out to industry professionals, younger individuals showing interest in transportation, WTS LA wants to show them where the jobs and careers are in transportation. But there's another aspect to Programs that's also very important.

"Programs are the most public face of the chapter. It's how most people get introduced to the chapter. Who we get to speak and what programs we put together are very important in that regard. They showcase what we're about as a chapter. Programs also give all of us a chance to get to know other people in our industry. More and more, with each program, I learn how big the transportation industry really is. And it's only expanding with technology growth like ridesharing and autonomous vehicles, etc. Now, more than ever, disruption is happening at a quicker pace. As the Programs Committee, we feel it's our obligation and our desire to ensure that WTS-LA members are up on the latest changes and advancements."

Programs and chapter membership are not only about networking and discovering the latest revolutionary transportation technology. For Ms. Anderson, there is another compelling reason why WTS has always been a part of her professional career.

"First, I want to say how grateful I am to my co-chairs and everyone who helps us pull together and brainstorm our programs. It's a dynamic group, and all of the ladies reach out to help one another. But that also speaks to the larger reason why WTS LA is so important to me. I'm so thankful for all of the relationships I've made through the chapter. It gets harder and harder as you go through life to make these kinds of relationships and meet people who are so open and supportive. It's just a great group of wonderful women."

"Last year at the awards dinner, I took a look around the room before I went in and I had to take a picture. I looked up and I said to myself, 'I know this person and this person and this person...' I knew so many of the people there, and I wanted to say hello to them all. It is an extraordinary feeling. And if your biggest issue when you go to a WTS-LA gathering is that you don't have enough time to say hello to everyone you know, well, that speaks volumes about the relationships you form in WTS LA..."