

## A Vision of the Future: WTS-LA Woman of the Year Nadine Lee's Plan for 2028



*Nadine Lee (Metro Deputy Chief Innovation Officer and 2018 WTS-LA Woman of the Year), 2019*

Though Metro Deputy Chief Innovation Officer Nadine Lee is extremely honored to be named WTS-LA Woman of the Year, on some level she doesn't really understand what all the fuss over her is about. Without question, Ms. Lee is a very accomplished transportation professional. And throughout her career she has distinguished herself in every position she's held. But in talking to her about her career, she'd much rather focus on the work itself.

"When I came to Metro three years ago, I knew there was a huge opportunity to change the way that people move and think about mobility in LA County," Ms. Lee explains. "And I remember saying in my interview that the planets had aligned over LA and that this is a unique time. LA can be a very different place for people if we transform the way they move. When we developed the [Vision 2028 Plan](#), that's what we had in mind."

Nothing short of revolutionary, the Vision 2028 Plan invites the public to reframe LA's transportation challenge as an issue of capacity, rather than simply miles traveled or bus versus train, etc. And that reframing can prove to be very powerful.

"We have to help people understand what the problem really is. And the problem is that people who drive in a single-occupancy vehicle are taking up a lot more space than people on a bus sharing a ride. We need to find a way to prioritize the 40 people on the bus over the single-occupancy vehicle that's taking up so much more space and not really paying for that space."

With that reframing, Ms. Lee and her team have set forth to bring their vision to reality. That type of monumental transformative achievement alone warrants consideration for her award. But with Ms. Lee, that's only the tip of the iceberg. In addition to significant career achievements both in Denver and Los Angeles and the promise of Vision 2028, Ms. Lee also has another prominent feature to her professional reputation.

"Nadine's dedication to fostering the next generation of leaders and to the career advancement of women in the industry is reflected in her participation and mentorship roles in organizations such as WTS and APTA, as well as within Metro," remarked Metro CEO Phil Washington. He's not alone in that assessment.

Ms. Lee mentored WTS-LA past president Amanda Heinke in the WTS-LA Mid-Career Leadership Program. Ms. Heinke explains that, "It meant the world to me that she was able to take the time to have breakfast with me and discuss the topics most pressing to me on my current career path. She was open

and honest and challenged me with new ideas—all things that are really valuable in a mentor. Her insights were so spot on, and I truly treasure the advice and information she shared with me. When I think of Woman of the Year candidates, the ones most deserving are those that turn around, reach behind them, and pull up the next generation. Nadine takes care to do exactly that.”

Sound Transit Corridor Operations Director Lacy Bell agrees. She adds, “Nadine is a leader who encourages others to share their opinions and understands that more can be achieved by empowering others around her.”

To everyone who knows her, those are not mere words. Ms. Lee truly does lead by encouragement and support. She also believes that WTS has played an important role in developing that leadership style.

“My career and WTS are inextricably linked. When I reflect back on my career and the pivotal things that happened to me, it’s the women and men I had as mentors that made a very real difference. Each of these people gave me a different nugget that helped me advance, and many of them were through WTS in Colorado, Los Angeles, and throughout the country.

“For example, several years ago when I was going for a promotion, my manager told me that none of the individuals applying would meet every single requirement listed on the job description. This had never occurred to me. When men see a list of job qualifications and they meet only a few of them, they apply for the job. But when women look at the same list, they think, ‘Oh my god, I only meet nine of ten!’ and they won’t apply. Now, I encourage women to take chances and help them realize that they don’t have to meet every qualification. They can hire other people to round out the team. Mentoring through WTS gives me a mechanism to share these perspectives and give other women the courage to advance more aggressively in their careers.

“WTS gives you exposure to a vast array of different people and styles, as well as the opportunity to learn and practice different skillsets in a safe, supportive environment. Through WTS, you have access to people at every level in the industry, providing a sounding board for practically every question that you’ve ever had. Participating in WTS gave me the background to do everything I’m doing today.”

Nadine Lee is both honored and flattered to be named 2018 WTS-LA Woman of the Year. As someone who has served in many capacities within WTS, she knows what goes into deciding this honor. Though virtually everyone who has worked with her professionally and through industry organizations are quick to describe her as passionate, generous, genial, insightful highly knowledgeable, and invaluable, she deflects such descriptors. In truth, she’d much rather talk about mobility and finding better ways of helping people get from Point A to Point B. For these reasons and numerous others, WTS-LA is proud to name Nadine Lee as the 2018 WTS-LA Woman of the Year.