

Lynn Feng Wants to Ensure that Lessons Earned Are Lessons Learned



Lynn Feng (Transportation planner at AECOM)

As a young transportation planner at AECOM, Lynn's work covers conventional transportation planning—think corridor studies, environmental clearance projects, etc.—to futuristic plans that include autonomous vehicle plans, smart mobility plans, and more. But, personally and professionally, her focus is definitely on the future.

“My work is mainly focused on developing strategies and concepts for new mobility. This includes planning multimodal and connected and autonomous vehicles, integrating the emerging transportation technological elements into traffic systems, as well as utilizing those new technologies to improve mobility for people from a transit perspective. In the very near future, many people will get around without having to drive, and driving will be faster and safer, too.” To some, that may seem revolutionary. To Lynn, however, she's simply integrating a new reality into a current system, something she seems to have a natural affinity for. She also sees that as a direct parallel with WTS-LA, an organization she credits with also making profound change in a current system.



“The transportation field is very male-dominated. I've been to many meetings where I'm the only woman or one of the very few women in the room. We have brilliant female transportation professionals. And that's where WTS-LA is so important. They're helping women break into those ranks and obtain leadership roles.”

Lynn is no newcomer to WTS-LA. In 2015, when she was a graduate student at the University of Southern California (USC), Lynn won the \$4,000 Myra L. Frank Memorial Graduate Scholarship. But that wasn't the beginning of her involvement.

“USC has a program that sponsors students for WTS-LA events. I started getting involved in my first year of graduate school. As the liaison between WTS-LA and USC, I coordinated with my school and the chapter to help students attend the monthly WTS-LA programs. Then, I became a WTS member and



started volunteering on different committees. I won a WTS-LA scholarship in my second year, and I was invited to participate even more, including attending board meetings.

“While at USC, I was managing a mentorship program at a transportation center. As I started to get more involved with WTS-LA, I began to think that I could volunteer on the Mentorship Committee and apply the lessons learned from my past mentorship program experience.”

Lynn worked with the then chair, Mahsa Pan, PE, Senior Civil Engineer with Port of Los Angeles, to optimize the existing program. When Mahsa retired after her term, she nominated Lynn to be the new chair. Naturally, Lynn was fully prepared to take over.

“This year we’re having senior level and mid-career professionals as mentors to guide emerging professionals and graduating graduate students. This is an amazing opportunity for young professionals to develop and refine their career goals. We also want them to have this opportunity to understand more about the transportation landscape in both the public and private sectors, so that they will see where they can best fit in. In addition, we will cover interpersonal communication, public speaking, writing, and negotiating skills. This year, we are focused on getting young people to broaden their horizons, and next year’s program will have a different target audience and theme.”

Lynn noted that next year’s mentorship program will focus on mid-career professionals—people with 10-15 years’ experience—and match them with mentors at the director level, covering a different set of topics more germane to this cohort. But Lynn believes that in addition to the structure of the program, a key element to success is how mentors and protégés are matched.

“We have a carefully designed 25-question form that everyone fills out about their personalities, career goals and experience, preferences, etc. Then, as a committee, we review the résumés of mentors and protégés and match them based on these factors. The mentors and protégés were connected and introduced to each other prior to the kick-off meeting. At the kick-off meeting, each participant received a packet detailing the program’s goals and objectives. But most importantly, participants in the mentorship program must make commitments to spend the time and energy to make the program the best it can be.”

From planning the transportation of tomorrow to helping her fellow WTS-LA members plan their futures, Lynn uses her unique perspective and abilities to better the lives of people in and out of the transportation industry today.