

Metro's Stephanie Leslie, PE, helps girls and women hear opportunity knocking...



Stephanie Leslie (Metro deputy project manager), Photos © John Livzey, 2019

Congresswoman Barbara Jordan said, “The imperative is to define what is right and do it.” Applying that both strategically and tactically, Stephanie Leslie, PE helps oversee one of Metro’s most complex projects—the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project. And as its deputy project manager, that’s about as monumental a challenge as it gets.

The \$2.058 billion Crenshaw/LAX Line will connect its eponymous neighborhood and Leimart Park to the City of Inglewood and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Running 8.5 miles, the light rail line will include eight new stations and the Southwestern Yard Maintenance Facility. For Ms. Leslie, though, Crenshaw serves as a perfect encapsulation of her career and her belief in giving back to the transportation industry and the community in myriad, important ways.

“I’ve been with Metro for five years now. But I started on the public agency side with Caltrans right out of college. I worked for both the contractor and consultant sides of the industry and realized I really like being on the public side. So, I came back and joined Metro.”

Her public service doesn’t end there. In addition to ensuring workplace equity—the Crenshaw/LAX project boasts incredible diversity with more women than you would normally see on a heavy civil project—Ms. Leslie also pursues equality in other ways. For example, at Metro she served on the inaugural Women and Girls Governing Council (WGGC). Requested by Metro CEO Phillip A. Washington to specifically examine “Metro policies, programs, and services and how they impact the lives of women and girls in Los Angeles County,” the WGGC looks to create a gender-balanced workforce, accelerate change, and develop of a strategy to address the complex and interrelated causes of gender inequality, mobility, and economic challenge within Metro and the communities it serves. For Ms. Leslie, this was a natural fit. “Phil Washington has been an excellent leader for this agency. And by initiating the WGGC, he gave us the opportunity to make recommendations to senior leadership as to what Metro can do to improve economic opportunity for women and girls in LA County and here at Metro. I was working on the subcommittee looking at economic development, and one of the recommendations we put forward was to create the Women and Girls Summit.”



Held at Metro headquarters on March 29, 2019, the inaugural event welcomed 200 junior and high school girls from across LA County. The girls met with a variety of women transportation leaders and participated

in hands-on workshops designed to give the girls meaningful understanding of career opportunities in the transportation industry today. According to everyone involved, it was a phenomenal success.

“There are so many different disciplines in transportation, particularly right now when things are booming in LA County. And transportation careers are stable careers, careers you can retire from. So, we wanted to open their eyes to this. We showed them that it’s a really diverse industry with many different disciplines.”

An expert in construction management, Ms. Leslie also brought that expertise to Metro’s Women Build Metro Los Angeles Apprenticeship Readiness Fair (WBMLA), a free event to facilitate access to the construction industry for women. Established in support of Metro’s Project Labor Agreement and Construction Careers Policy, the WBMLA is part of Metro’s effort to increase female participation in construction. For Ms. Leslie, there is a recurring through-line in all of her efforts.

“It’s important to always reach back and help those that are still finding their way, to help them access opportunity and to grow. Being involved in the community has always been important to me.”

Ms. Leslie believes her philosophy aligns perfectly with WTS-LA and its mission.

“WTS-LA is extremely valuable. It’s very important for women to have a forum where they can come together and make sure that they’re not being ignored in the industry, that they have opportunity, and that all of this is passed on to future generations. It’s not going to just happen organically. People have to make it happen. It’s got to be a proactive effort with intent. And that’s exactly what WTS-LA delivers.”

Congresswoman Barbara Jordan said, “The imperative is to define what is right and do it.” Stephanie Leslie does that on one of the most challenge transportation projects in the country. But it’s something she’s been doing for her entire career. And recently, she was recognized for it.

During its 50th anniversary celebrations, the Los Angeles Council of Black Professional Engineers recognized her as one of *50 Phenomenal Black Women in the Field of STEM*.

“This group included the first licensed black woman engineer in California, Lois Cooper. I worked with her for many years in Caltrans District 7. It’s great to be put in the same company as Lois, a woman I looked up to for many years. Also among the 50 recognized women were women that I found and hired. It was nice to see that they’re doing well in the industry and that they were recognized for their work. It was all very gratifying.”