

## Reflections on My Two-Years as WTS-LA President



*Lisa Karwoski, PE, WTS-LA President (Mott MacDonald), Photo © John Livzey*

The end of the year spurs reflection. But the end of a presidency calls for even greater contemplation. For me, both are happening right now and causing me to review. And of course, current events weigh heavily as well. So, right now the confluence of all of this has caused me to really sit back, think, and take notice of the chapter, our members, our guests, and what we've accomplished over the past two years since I took over the helm as WTS-LA president. Though it hasn't always been easy, this reflection most definitely brought a smile to my face and warmth to my heart.

I will start with one achievement that I am especially proud; in fact, it was a personal goal for my presidency. Over the last two years, WTS-LA awarded \$200,000 in annual scholarships...\$200,000! With the help of individuals, local firms and agencies dedicated to advancing women in transportation we reached this impressive goal and helped dozens of inspiring future transportation professionals reach their goals. If you missed the talented and impressive group of scholarship recipients from 2020, I encourage you to take a look at their accomplishments by clicking [here](#). I want to thank all those that supported WTS-LA in delivering those scholarships and encourage your continued support moving forward. This is a direct way we can ensure our industry continues to reach the best of the next generation and encourage women to be part of this incredible field and become the transportation leaders of the future.

Of course, delivering excellent programming is also core to the organization, and I am honestly in awe of the caliber of people and experiences WTS-LA provided to our members these past two years. In 2019, we welcomed an outstanding roster of programs guests, including Caltrans District Directors John Bulinski and Toks Omishakin, and then newly minted Metrolink CEO Stephanie Wiggins; as well as hosted a truly educational ports program, a fascinating LAWA construction tour, and the list goes on.

Though hindered by the pandemic, programs in 2020 also impressed. Metro's Highway Program Managing Executive Officer Abdollah Ansari filled the room for our last in-person event; and the virtual room was also packed for the rail panel featuring Metro's Jeanet Owens and June Susilo, Metrolink's Todd McIntyre, and LOSSAN Corridor's Donna DeMartino. The program on Assembly Constitutional Amendment (ACA 5) with California Assemblymember Mike Gipson and Metro's Tashai Smith was incredibly helpful to understand this important proposal and we learned a tremendous amount about what is happening at our local airports with Long Beach International Airport Executive Director Cynthia Guidry and Los Angeles World Airport Chief Corporate Strategy and Affairs Officer Michelle Schwartz.

And at our annual Scholarship and Awards Dinners we were able to recognize transportation luminaries, including Women of the Year Cynthia Guidry (2019) and Jeanet Owens (2020) for their indelible contributions to the transportation industry. In case you missed it, this year's event was dedicated to honor transportation's frontline workers. Selflessly, they have made an enduring contribution to society by

keeping goods and people moving during one of the darkest hours in our nation's history. We thank them all.

And I haven't even mentioned the work that WTS-LA accomplished these last two years in support of workforce development. Our mentorship program, professional development educational events, outreach to students at all levels, and so much more... these past two years provided our membership with a vast array of resources and expertise to help better do their jobs and grow professionally and personally.

Of course, getting all that done took a small army of people. I am eternally grateful to the more than 50 amazing people that are on the board, work on committees, volunteer to help with events, and take time to get involved and help support our members and keep this chapter strong. Each of you fuels the chapter's success and through your efforts, and the efforts of those that came before us these past 35 years, our chapter is financially stable, growth-oriented, and is soaring in our mission to advance women in transportation. I am filled with gratitude to these hard-working people, that move things forward, develop ideas, and ensure we are constantly evolving and improving as an organization. WTS-LA truly is an example where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts—and those parts are all outstanding.

So, as I look back on my presidency and wonder where the time went and how quickly it truly did pass, I am grateful in the extreme and unable to fully express how I feel. So, I will turn to someone else who went through something similar. Near the end of his presidency, James Garfield said this, "There are men and women who make the world better just by being the kind of people they are. They have the gift of kindness or courage or loyalty or integrity. It really matters very little whether they are behind the wheel of a truck or running a business or bringing up a family. They teach the truth by living it." I love that. And that's exactly what I have observed from this unique position at the head of WTS-LA. We all teach the truth—and further the truth—by living it. Thank you so very much for giving me this opportunity to serve you and teach my truth by living it.

Please stay safe. And here's wishing you a happy and healthy holiday season and that the new year will bring us back together in person once again. Either way though, get ready for more great programming (in person or virtual) and opportunities to grow in 2021. And if you can, make a plan to get a little more involved in WTS-LA in the new year. I can truly say it is time well spent with a group of remarkable people.