



Advancing women
Advancing transportation

Quarterly Newsletter

Q1 2021

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

WTS San Diego County Chapter Board of Directors welcomes you to year 2021! We greet this year with the new Executive Board and many new board members. Special thanks to the Immediate Past President Brianna Pilkinton and the outgoing board for their leadership and outstanding job of making sure we continue serving our members by quickly adapting to change. I am excited to take the helm of leadership as we continue to navigate the new normal of virtual reality, to take on challenges of equity, and be the go-to professional organization that is known for supporting our members.

In March 2021 we celebrated Women's History Month, and we hear the recurring theme: "Choose to Challenge." As we witness bias and injustice, we must Choose to Challenge; as we fight for the seat at the table, we must Choose to Challenge; as we observe continued gender inequality in our own work offices, we MUST Choose to Challenge. Only with the awareness and action will come change. What does "Choose to Challenge" look like to you? For me, it is speaking up and raising awareness when I see NO women among the pool of recent promotions; it is highlighting achievements of women on projects and community events; it is crediting and repeating what another woman said at a meeting; and it is always having a seat at the table. We all can do our part to make women feel more mainstream, be it in transportation industry, in academia, or in politics.

Another way to choose to challenge is to join WTS. Active involvement in WTS is one of the most rewarding activities of my professional career. If you have been engaged in WTS, you have seen firsthand the impact that our organization has on our industry, from the young professionals and students and all the way through executive level members. Leadership, scholarships, internships, career moves, mentorship, networking, and professional development, are just a few of the realized benefits of the WTS Community. I cherish the support from the connections I have made through WTS and I never miss an opportunity to lend a hand and guide others in their professional journey.

I would like to introduce the incoming [Chapter Board of Directors](#) and Executive Board: Vice President – Cecily Taylor of Fehr & Peers, Secretary – Julie Froelich of Jacobs, and Treasurer - Melissa Gomes of Parsons. Our board consists of long-standing and new members excited to share our vision of achieving equity and access for women in our industry. We have re-established the Diversity and Inclusion Committee co-chaired by Danielle Zhang of Caltrans and Kena Teon of MTS. The goal of this committee is to keep the focus on diversity in all our activities and be inclusive of the community and membership we serve.

I am very proud of our SDSU Student Chapter, with their passionate leadership and member engagement in the virtual world. Our Small Business Executive Women Mentoring Program is off to a great start. Our ongoing Mentoring Program is in the new cycle since September, and I know our members are benefiting from it greatly.

Thanks to our corporate sponsors, in 2020 we awarded \$30,000 in scholarships at high school, undergraduate and graduate levels, and we would like to do no less this year. Please help us achieve this scholarship goal by participating in fundraising events we will hold throughout the year and donating to the WTS Foundation during our programs. Please take advantage of your membership and join us for Mentorship, book club, Lunch and Learns and many other programs of regional and national significance we are putting together for you this year.

If you want to be a part of the solution to create equity and to embrace diversity, what better professional organization can you find than WTS, to help you channel your energy to affect change? Join us at <https://wtsinternational.org>.



Lima Saft, PhD, PE, PMP
WTS San Diego County Chapter President
Caltrans San Diego and SDSU

2021 WTS San Diego Chapter Board

President	Lima Saft	Award Recognitions	Amy Jackson (Co-Lead)
Vice President	Cecily Taylor		Claudia Brizuela (Co-Lead)
Secretary	Julie Froelich		Jim Starling
Treasurer	Melissa Gomez		Chris Wahl
Immediate Past President	Brianna Pilkinton	Transportation You Corporate Sponsorship Membership	Lisa Madsen
Director At Large	Mary Holland	Professional Development	Stacy Williams
Director At Large	Sunnie House	Communications	Bree Robertoy
Director At Large	Eleanor Gonzalez		Annie Merritt (Co-Chair)
Annual Awards	Seana Urquhart		Nensi Lakrori
	Dawn Wilson (Co-Chair)	Regional Council Chair	Danielle Zhang
Scholarships	Marissa Thomas (Co-Chair)	Diversity & Inclusion	Kena Teon (Co-Chair)
	Jenny Vick (Co-Chair)		

SUBMIT A WOW!

Know an amazing woman co-worker, industry friend, or WTS member and think she deserves recognition? Well we do too!

- 1** Download our brief WOW nomination form at http://bit.ly/WTSSD_WOW
- 2** Fill out the nomination form
- 3** Email the form to wtsd.communications@gmail.com

Elected Women on Boards

By: Stacy Williams
Professional Development Chair
Twining, Inc.

Our First program of the year was held virtually on January 26th and attended by around 50 people. The program featured an outstanding panel of women. This program was moderated by Sara Katz, Founder of Katz & Associates; and our Women on Boards panel included The honorable Mary Casillas Salas, Mayor of Chula Vista; The honorable Dr. Priya Bhat Patel, Council Member of District 3 for the City of Carlsbad, and the honorable Dr. Akilah Weber, Vice Mayor of the city of La Mesa, and recently elected California Assembly Member.

The panelists discussed what led them to run for office, expressing their desire to have representation that reflects the makeup of the community and a true desire to be a public servant. They shared how they prepared for office, highlighting: understanding of the end goal and have flexibility around the means. We got to learn the obstacles these women on boards have had to get through in their time holding office, and though these positions take a lot of time, they are very rewarding!

Attendees were provided with a great deal of information and a truly inspiring program, from the honorable panel. Thank you to our speakers and to all the participants who made this program a success!



WTS San Diego Volunteer Open House

By: Lisa Madsen
Membership Chair
SANDAG

WTS San Diego held its annual Volunteer Open House on February 18, 2021. This event was held virtually over Zoom, and featured presentations from the Membership, Communications, Mentorship, Corporate Sponsorship, Professional Development, Scholarship, Annual Awards Dinner, Diversity & Inclusion, and Professional Organizations Committees, as well as the Student Chapter and the Transportation YOU program. Thank you to everyone who signed up to become a volunteer this year!

Mobility Conversations: COVID & Beyond

By: Cecily Taylor
WTS Vice President
Senior Transportation Engineer, Fehr & Peers

Our second program of the year was held virtually on February 25 in partnership with the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals - San Diego chapter and attended by around 60 people. The program featured Sam Schwartz, CEO of Sam Schwartz Transportation Consultants; Sharon Cooney, CEO of MTS; and Deborah Jones, Associate Account Executive of SANDAG's iCommute Employer Program.

The panelists discussed how mobility trends have changed due to the ongoing pandemic, both in the early months of transitioning to working from home, and over the past year. Sam Schwartz discussed the disconnect between a fear of COVID-19 transmission on public transit despite case studies worldwide repeatedly finding no correlation. Sharon Cooney shared the new projects and programs that MTS is looking forward to, from several Transit Oriented Developments to zero-emission buses to a new business support program. Finally, Deborah Jones shared iCommute's data regarding the feasibility and interest of San Diego occupations continuing to telework after the health crisis, and the pilot program from iCommute to offer Telework Assistance.

Attendees were provided with this wealth of information, and a dynamic Question and Answer period followed to dive deeper into our region's plans for the future. Thank you to our speakers and to all the participants who made this program a success!



Sharon Cooney



Sam Schwartz



Deborah Jones

WTS SD Celebrating International Women's Day

By: Lima Saft

WTS San Diego County Chapter President
Caltrans

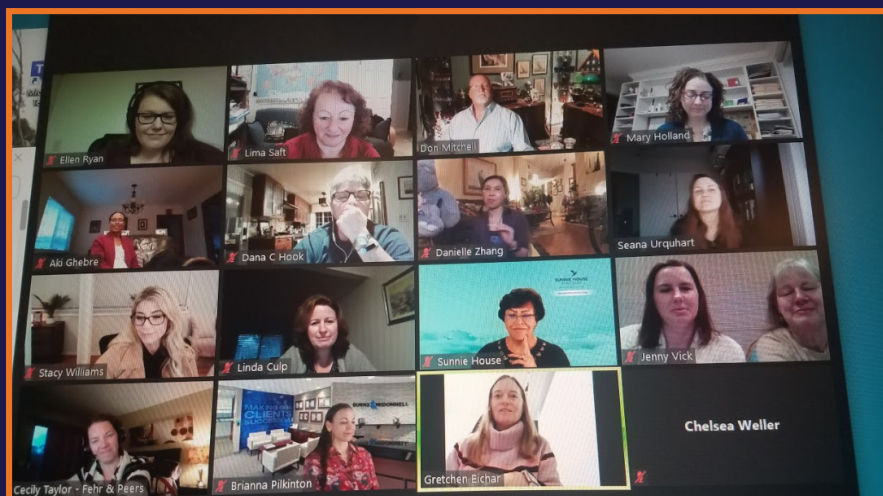
March 8th is an International Women's Day celebrated around the world. We decided to commemorate it with a virtual Happy Hour attended by sixteen WTS members including our chapter VIPs – past presidents, inaugural chapter members, and even two past WTS International's Chairs of the Board! We also had a much-appreciated representation of our male membership, thank you Don Mitchell! Thank you, Stacy Williams, for organizing this amazing get-together on a very short notice!

The attendees shared their experiences and how they have been changing throughout their careers. The consensus has been – with all the recent improvements - we still have a long way to go to reach true equity. Although many companies have created inclusion and diversity programs and are working hard to create a fair and equitable environment that would support women, there are still decision-making processes and beliefs in place that make it harder for a woman to advance in the technical profession.

According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), Engineering is the most male-dominated profession in the United States, with women making up only 16% of the engineering workforce. Even now, girls are less likely to choose Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines as a career path. Why is that? Why do they need to be prompted and encouraged to enter the STEM Field?

The Society of Women Engineers (SWE) [data](#), published in 2018, shows that only 7.9% of women entered STEM programs as freshmen at colleges and universities, and out of that small number, 32% decided to switch out of STEM while in college. Upon graduation, only 30% of women still worked in engineering after 20 years. So, why is it so hard to attract women to engineering and keep them in this field? The study listed organizational culture as one of the main reasons for this departure.

What can we, as professional women and men, do to change these trends? We need to lead by example. We must celebrate women who are role models for future generations of professionals. Most importantly we have to change the attitude from 'STEM is not only for boys, girls should try it' to 'STEM is for all students.' Let's pay it forward by mentoring young professionals, sharing our knowledge and choosing to challenge.



Caltrans San Diego Celebrates Women's History Month with WTS SD and Keynote Speaker Sunnie House

March 25, 2021

By: Lima Saft

WTS San Diego County Chapter President
Caltrans

Every March, since 1987, the United States of America has observed Women's History Month remembering great women and their contributions to the history of our country. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) commemorated the Month of March with weekly media posts, webinars and interviews, and in San Diego it culminated with a Signature Program that featured our WTS San Diego Director-at-Large, Sunnie House. District Director, Gustavo Dallarda, gave a welcome address, and Lima Saft, Caltrans Engineer and our Chapter President, talked about the role WTS plays in helping women make history, and introduced Sunnie House as the Keynote Speaker.

Titled "The Power within You!", it was truly a celebration of spirit, high achievement and inspiring journey! Sunnie House shared how she was able to crush her fears, commit to her clarity, cultivate her courage, and connect with her power within to make radical changes in her personal and professional lives to achieve a state of fulfillment and bliss.

The lessons presented by Sunnie can be used by each one of us. What would we like to be remembered for? What are the three (or five, or ten) most important achievements we want to reach short-term and long-term? The trip of self-discovery can be very eye-opening, and if you are ready for it, you can overcome your negative emotions, stop worrying about the past or the future and live in the present. Sunnie referenced several books that helped her and could be of interest to the attendees, specifically "The Power is Within You," by Louise Hay, "You are a Bad Ass: How to stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life," by Jenn Sincero, and "Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself," by Dr. Joe Dispenza.

Sunnie engaged the audience by asking pointed questions about their biggest fear. It was clear from the answers that many people are not comfortable talking about that, but once they could identify their fears and the source of those fears, they could overcome them and gain more clarity about what they really want to accomplish in life. And that power is within each of us!

Thank you Sunnie for giving Caltrans employees a glimpse into the world of endless possibilities! One of the missions of Sunnie House Strategies is to provide coaching and guidance to professionals looking for professional fulfillment and happiness in life.



Mentorship for Women Executives in Small Business Firms

By: Sunnie House
WTS San Diego Director at Large
Principal/Founder of Sunnie House Strategies

“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself.”
– Oprah Winfrey

The WTS San Diego Chapter launched an exciting new mentoring program in 2021, geared specifically to women executives within small business firms. The chapter initiated a pilot program for a group of women executives who work in small business firms to connect to other local women executives in the industry for a one-year, one-on-one mentoring program.

The purpose of this program is outlined as follows:

- To support the personal, professional, and business acumen growth of women working in small business firms.
- Promoting networking among women executives
- Engagement of women executives in WTS
- Support of small business firms and their engagement in WTS

Five mentor/protégé pairings were selected for this pilot program based on the applications and background information received from the protégés and mentors, respectively. The Small Business Executive Mentoring (SBEWM) Committee reviewed the applications and paired the participants based on the protégé needs. A virtual kick off meeting was conducted in November 2020 to launch the program.

The SBEWM Committee would like to thank the Pilot Program participants which represent the following organizations:

Small Business Firm Protégés	Mentors
KTUA	CDM Smith
TTG	HMTB
Blue Lake civil	Caltrans
San Dieguito Engineering	MTS
GPM	City of San Diego

The SBEWM Committee will receive new applications for this program in the Fall of 2021 for the following year program. Eligibility for Protégés and Mentors are as follows:

Eligible Mentors: Senior level women from private and public sectors with a variety of titles, such as CEO, Partner, Executive Vice President, Vice President, Officer, Director, Senior Manager, Chief, Principal, etc. and/or 15+ years of experience.

Eligible Protégés: Senior level women with similar titles as above who are employed by businesses which are certified by California State Department of General Services (DGS) and other governmental agencies as small, minority, woman-owned, disadvantaged, veteran disabled, etc. business enterprises working in the transportation industry or a related field.

If you are interested in applying as a protégé or mentor, please contact Sunnie House at 619-787-3777 or at sunnie@shousestrategies.com.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee has been Re-instated!

By: Danielle Zhang
Diversity and Inclusion Chair
Caltrans

The purpose of the WTS San Diego Diversity and Inclusion Committee is to embrace equality and diversity within all aspects of the transportation industry. The transportation sector is one of the most diversified industries by nature requiring various skills, trades and professions. WTS International defines diversity as the inclusion of differences and similarities from all categories of membership and participation including ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, education, disability, geography, and profession. The WTS San Diego chapter will embody the WTS International principals and encourage other committees to join this crucial effort.



Danielle Zhang – Chair

Danielle Zhang is a Contract Manager & Landscape Associate working at Caltrans, D11. She has worked in both public & private sectors internationally. The majority of her over 30 years of professional practice was focused on Transportation Planning and Design. She is very proud of her Chinese heritage and firmly believes promoting Diversity & Inclusion is the key element to building robust, equitable transportation for all Californians. She has lived, worked, and traveled to six continents, as “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness ... - Mark Twain”.

Kena Teon – Co-Chair

Kena Teon is the Executive Assistant to the Chief Operating Officer of Transit Services for the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, assisting the COO in leading the efforts of over 1600 employees & 800 buses, both directly operated and contracted services. Kena has worked in public transportation industry for 18 years in both the public and private sectors. Kena is a proud Mexican-Asian/ American and her diverse background is what motivates her to inspire respect and celebrate the differences in all people.



“Together we will develop and implement one unified yet diverse vision, mission and goal,
because:
Together: We Are Stronger”

-Thank you for supporting the D&I Committee

Diversity and Inclusion Committee Mission Statement

Mission:

Enhance the benefits of our Chapter by ensuring diversity is always at the forefront of all members, program panels and topics in an inclusive and accepting atmosphere.

Vision:

WTS San Diego County is a professional organization chapter whose membership includes all transportation industry professions, representatives of public, private and academic organizations, and people of various backgrounds; whose programs cover diverse subjects and panels, and whose recognition awards and scholarships reach diverse applicant pools.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee of WTS San Diego County Chapter is to bring equity and diversity to all aspects of the chapter's activities. The transportation sector is one of the most diversified industries by nature requiring various skills, trades and professions. WTS International defines diversity as the inclusion of differences and similarities from all categories of membership and participation including ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, education, disability, geography, and profession. The WTS San Diego County Chapter embodies the WTS International's principles through the commitments of its committees.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee Goals, Objectives and Responsibilities:

- Establish goals and a baseline of metrics to measure diversification
- Identify liaisons to participate on all Committees to ensure diversification
- Provide members with a supportive space and tools to learn about topics related to diversity, identity, and its role in the transportation industry
- Through membership surveying identify underrepresented areas
- Through membership surveying work with Committees to identify strategies to attract, recruit and retain a diverse membership; including identifying underrepresented groups
- Promote diversity, inclusion and equality as a core value of WTS San Diego County Chapter
- Adopt a culture where every voice is welcome, heard, and respected



WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

HOW ARE YOU WORKING FROM HOME?



HOW ARE YOU SOCIAL DISTANCING?



1

On your Instagram or Facebook account, **post a picture** of how you are working from home or social distancing yourself!

2

Tag **@wts_sandiego!**
Use the hashtags **#wtssdwfh** and **#wtssdsocialdistancing**

OR

Submit a picture and caption to @wts_sandiego and we will post it for you!



JOIN WTS TODAY!



What is WTS?

Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) is an international organization dedicated to building the future of transportation through the global advancement of women. With nearly 8,500 members, including both women and men, WTS is turning the glass ceiling into a career portal through its professional programs, networking opportunities, and unparalleled access to industry the government leaders.

Why join WTS?

- Excellent networking opportunities during our programs at lower rates than non-members
- "Members Only" social events throughout the year at no cost
- Access to WTS International's members directory
- Professional development through our programs offered only to members
- Exclusive access to the online WTS Knowledge Lab*
- Become a mentor and/or mentee through our Mentorship Program
- Raffle drawings for members throughout the year

Sign up [here](#) or download [flier](#) for more details!

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CORPORATE SPONSORS!**



PLATINUM LEVEL



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SMALL BUSINESS LEVEL



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For more information, contact Chris Wahl at 619-758-3007 or C.Wahl@fehrandpeers.com.



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