



Advancing Women in Transportation
Greater New York Chapter



Issue: 53

December 2019

2019-2020
CORPORATE
PARTNERS

Upcoming Events

Diamond

December 2019

WTS Young Professionals' Holiday Happy Hour

Dec. 9, 6:00 PM-8:00 PM



Harding's
32 E 21st Street
New York, NY , 10010

AECOM

The WTS Young Professionals Committee invites you to join us for a holiday happy hour with a cause! Please join us for 2 hours of complimentary appetizers and drinks where you will have an opportunity to network with fellow young professionals in transportation from the greater New York City area.

ARUP

We are embracing the holiday spirit and will be donating all registration fees the WTS-GNY Scholarship Fund. WTS-GNY rewards more than \$20,000 annually to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in transportation field.

Register [here!](#)



GPI

2019 WTS-GNY Gala

By Adrienne Zicklin Kanter

WTS-GNY's Gala is the highlight of any year. It brings industry



professionals together to celebrate the achievements of women leaders and tomorrow's rising stars. The 2019 Gala was held on Monday, October 7th at Battery Gardens Restaurant in Lower Manhattan. During the cocktail hour, attendees were able to feast on magnificent views of New York Harbor as they networked and chatted with friends, colleagues and associates. They had gathered to honor the 2019 Woman of the Year, Denise Berger, Chief of Operations at PANYNJ. Berger, a WTS International board member, is a longtime supporter of the organization and its mission. The chapter also awarded scholarships to eight young women, who are certain to make their mark on the industry in the near future.

WTS-GNY was delighted to have Zoë Davidson, Milstein Properties general counsel; Elisa Picca, Nassau County Department of Public Works chief deputy commissioner and retired LIRR executive vice president; and Rick Cotton, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey executive director, among the evening's featured speakers. WTS-GNY President Alexa Gangemi began the program by welcoming everyone and thanking the chapter's corporate sponsors without whose tremendous support the organization would be unable to continue its important work. Gangemi then turned the stage over to Picca, who has been involved in market development, public affairs, procurement, and logistics and asset management sectors over the course of her long and distinguished career.

Berger opened her remarks by expressing her appreciation for the opportunity to "work for and alongside some truly outstanding people [from whom] I learned a great deal about architecture, engineering, project delivery and construction," over the past 30-plus years. She went on to discuss the privilege of working on many of the world's busiest transportation facilities, which serve as "vital gateways for hundreds of millions of people." But then, Ms. Berger confessed that it was not easy. She was often the only woman at a job site or sitting in a design progress meeting. And as her career evolved, so too did her personal life.

Meanwhile, the event featured a raffle, whose proceeds went toward the WTS-GNY Scholarship Fund, which contributes to the scholarships that had been awarded. This year's raffle raised \$2850. Thank you to all who participated and contributed. Also, much gratitude to the Gala's volunteers who helped plan the event, promote the prize drawing, worked the registration desk and crowd, designed the programs and name badges, and ensure all the logistics were executed.



Emerald



**Sam
Schwartz
Consulting,
LLC**

Ruby





You can read the full article [here](#).

See the full photo album [here!](#)

Spotlight: Petra Todorovich Messick

Based on Summer 2019 Learn from a Leader and a subsequent interview

By Alexandra Chamandy-Cook

Petra Todorovich Messick, director of planning for the Gateway Program at Amtrak and director of portfolio management, did not expect to pursue a career in transportation, but she did know that she was prepared to work hard and was committed to making a positive social impact.

Ms. Messick's post-college story began in the spring 2000 when, upon graduating from Vassar College with a degree in geography, she packed all her belongings into a Pontiac Grand Am and moved to Greenwich Village in New York City. After working a couple Dot-com jobs to pay the bills, Ms. Messick landed as an administrative assistant at the Regional Plan Association (RPA) in January 2001. The RPA had a mission in which she believed, and she was excited to get her foot in the door at an organization with a storied history in regional planning.

She reported directly to Robert Yaro, RPA's executive director at the time, who had hired Ms. Messick because of her undergraduate thesis on state-led land use and farm land preservation. Her assignments at the RPA quickly encompassed more than just administrative duties. Shortly after starting, 9/11 shook the world and in response, the RPA led a coalition entitled "Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown NY." Petra was tasked with much of the responsibility of running and coordinating this initiative, which culminated in RPA's hosting "Listening to the City" in July 2002, which brought together thousands of New Yorkers at the Jacob Javits Center to evaluate proposals for the



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rebuilding of the World Trade Center site. This event opened her eyes to NYC's strong civic community, which in large part has kept her in the City for all these years.

Her work with the RPA facilitated Ms. Messick's discovery that urban planning was her calling and motivated her to pursue her master's degree in city and regional planning full time at the Rutgers, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, while continuing to work at the RPA part-time. When she graduated in 2004, she was promoted to the role of planner at RPA.

Though she has no plans of slowing down anytime soon, if she were to retire tomorrow, Ms. Messick would like to find a historic farmhouse on the New England Coast where she could grow herbs and tomatoes and spend more time with her husband and children.

You can read the full article [here!](#)

3-2-1...Lift-off! Book Club Meeting #2 Discussed The Moment of Lift with Patty Clark!

By Leticia Caviness and Heather Jones

On October 24th, the Communications Committee hosted its second Book Club Meeting to discuss *The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World* by Melinda Gates, which was attended by over 30 participants. The discussion was kicked off by guest speaker Patty Clark, chief strategy officer for the Aviation Department at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Ms. Clark sprinkled colorful quotes throughout the room and engaged the audience in a conversation about experiences described in the book that had a lasting positive/negative impact on readers. She added humor throughout the evening and commented on how tough it would be for any organizational leader to obtain anonymous feedback while live on camera. Ms. Clark reflected on moments in her career when being the only woman in the room meant she had to own that identity and use it to her advantage.

In the book, Ms. Gates reports that "33% of all computer science graduates are female, yet in the workplace only one in five employees in the technology industry are female." This is a parallel trend observed in the transportation industry where there's a higher number of females that graduate from civil engineering and/or architecture programs, yet overtime we lose women in both fields in the workplace.

The meeting facilitated candid discussions on topics such as family planning, good management, listening skills, and ability to change/evolve. A common theme within the book was dealing with the feeling of marginalization. Individuals should not have to bargain for our positions and rights. As a society, we should evolve to provide equality to all no matter the gender, race, age, or beliefs.

In order to change our culture, we need to be better managers. Good

practice



management is not what you say or do, but how you make others feel. People want to feel heard and valued. Good management supports people by providing new opportunity for them to try (and maybe fail), but not at the cost of their career. Collectively, we can help to build a better management system to support one another, promote growth, listen, and attract the top talent. This allows for each of us to feel respected and valued. As seen throughout WTS and its subcommittees as well as quoted from *The Moment of Lift* by Melinda Gates: when women gather with one another, include one another, tell our stories to one another, share our grief with one another, we find our voice with one another. We create a new culture-not one that was imposed on us, but one we build with our own voices and values.

Collectively and individually, we are the lift that needs to happen. We must be intentional with our actions to create a new culture. Ms. Clark created a safe space for sharing our personal and professional life experiences which lifted everyone's spirit. Participants continued to network after the event over pizza and refreshments. Attendees walked away knowing how each of us could be a better person and listener through our new perspective. We look forward to carrying on the tradition of the guest speaker recommending a book for the next book club meeting.



See the full photo album [here!](#)

Spotlight: Penny Eickemeyer

By Anna Stokes, WTS Scholarship Recipient, Project Manager at the Northeast Corridor Commission

Penny Eickemeyer, now the associate director for research at the University Transportation Research Center, has had a long and varied career in transportation planning. She began her professional life serving in the AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

program, working with the East Tennessee Community Design Center (ETCDC), a nonprofit organization which provides professional design and planning assistance to community groups. Her work with ETCDC helped guide her into a career in urban planning which led her to Harvard University's Graduate School of Design where she obtained her master's degree in urban and regional planning with a specialization in housing and community development in 1980.

Although her passion for community planning and government was always embedded in her career goals, Ms. Eickemeyer's interest in transportation came about a bit later. After graduating from Harvard, Ms. Eickemeyer moved to New York City where she began work for the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development. This position not only gave her insight into the workings of New York City's government, but also made her a daily subway commuter riding between her job and her home in Forest Hills, Queens. A few years later, following a move to Westchester, she found herself trading in her subway rides for trips on the Metro-North Railroad, further instilling a passion for trains and transportation.

Eventually, as Ms. Eickemeyer was looking for new professional opportunities, she found a position at the Metropolitan Transportation Association (MTA) Planning Department. Not only had her interest in transportation grown as a regular train commuter, but she also had begun to find herself excited about transportation because of its multi-faceted relationship to community development, the economy and job growth, suburban development, as well as other aspects of urban planning. She was drawn to the MTA particularly because of its role in connecting the many parts of the region. Additionally, she believed there was a high level of professional opportunity available within the MTA for a person with her expertise.

What advice might she give to a woman contemplating taking time off of work to care for their families? Ms. Eickemeyer recommended that she maintain high-quality relationships with former colleagues; suggesting they go to lunch once in a while and stay interested in current projects. Additionally, Ms. Eickemeyer suggests staying involved in professional organizations like WTS.

Ms. Eickemeyer remains fascinated by transportation and the way that it touches all facets of urban planning. What advice would she offer women just starting out in their careers in the field of transportation? She emphasized the importance of being ambitious and assertive as well as the value of taking advantage of conferences and opportunities to network with other people in the field. Overall, she would tell them to be confident and to believe in themselves and their ideas.

You can read the full article [here!](#)

YP Trending Topics Panel Discussion

By Hannah Spierer

On November 13th, the WTS-GNY Young Professionals Committee hosted its Trending Topic series exploring the intersection of

transportation policy, urban design, and climate change. Four professionals from these fields participated in an enlightening panel discussion about current public and private sector initiatives, and the ongoing policy challenges in these fields. Attendees engaged with the panel, asking questions about first-mile/last-mile transportation solutions, how to leverage education as a tool for communicating the importance of climate change and sustainability to the broader public, and a call to action for how we as individuals can contribute to a healthier planet. The panel discussion was accompanied by a night of networking and appetizers at the Factory380 in midtown Manhattan. The Young Professionals Committee is especially grateful to Gita Nandan, Christine Weydig, Jen Robertson, and Jennifer Fogliano for joining us and sharing their unique perspectives on this trending topic.

See the full photo album [here!](#)

Volunteers Wanted and Appreciated!

WTS-GNY

is always interested in volunteers to help the Chapter. Don't see anything of interest below, but want to help? Email us at wtsigny@gmail.com to find a committee that's right for you!

Communications Committee: The WTS GNY chapter is seeking a new editor to assist with the production of the monthly Chapter news. Our former editor is taking sabbatical and anyone interested in volunteering as an editor is welcomed to send an e-mail to the Communications Committee at wtsigny.communications@gmail.com; students are welcomed to volunteer. Additionally, our social media expert has transitioned into a different industry and we welcome anyone with an interest in volunteering to serve as our next social media person; training can be provided.

The Communications Committee is responsible for disseminating information to all members regarding programs, professional development events, and other opportunities. They manage the website content, all social media platforms, and the production of the monthly Chapter News.

Transportation Job Opportunities

WTS-GNY would like to be a resource for women seeking positions in transportation and firms looking for candidates. Visit our [Job Opportunities](#) page for latest updates!

If your firm would like to post a position, fill out our [job form](#). We will share your job opportunity on our LinkedIn Page and in our next Chapter News as well as our website.

More opportunities on the [WTS-GNY Jobs Page!](#)

Job Title Structural Engineer

How to Apply [Website](#)

Deadline 12/31/2019

Employer WSP

Job Title Transit & Rail Intern - Summer 2020

How to Apply [Website](#)

Deadline Open until vacancy filled

Employer Middlesex County

Job Title Director of Public Works

How to Apply [Website](#)

Deadline Open until vacancy filled

Employer Parsons

Job Title NE Regional ITS Project Manager

How to Apply [Website](#)

Deadline Open until vacancy filled

Have exciting content for the next issue?

Article pitches, women in transportation news, member spotlights, discussion topic ideas: [Email us](#) by 01/25/2020.

Did your email address change?

If your email or mailing address has changed, log into the [WTS website](#) and update your information in the "My Account" page.