



*Jenelle Saunders, WTS-LA 2021-22 President*

## **That may have been the year that was, but this will be the year that will be...**

Through the roller-coaster that was 2021, I lost some, gained some, and overall, I learned a lot. And there is some value to be gotten in looking back, in examining the past year for glimmers of wonder, things to inspire us in the year to come.

First and foremost, we joined together to further our work in transportation and WTS-LA's mission. Despite it being a pandemic-filled year, together we achieved much. WTS-LA not only honored its commitment to our members and our mission, we also enhanced it, advocating even more strongly for the advancement of women in transportation and providing immense value in numerous ways. So, I want to thank you. You made that happen. You are an inspiration. And in that vein, I would like to remind you of some of what we accomplished together this year.

Though it's impossible to recount all of the excellent work from each individual this past year, I would like to highlight a few of the things that we did together. Here's what made the greatest impression on me:

- We held 8 virtual programs including a new approach that incorporated Platinum Corporate Partners to help plan events, including choosing topics and panel speakers.
- Our outstanding early-career mentorship program ran from June to October with 10 mentor-mentee pairs. It concluded with an in-person mixer, wrapping up the program with a photographer taking headshots for use in professional development.
- With more than 40 participants, WTS-LA hosted its first ever golf clinic, looking to bring greater gender parity to the links.
- Drawing more than 40 attendees from 10 companies, WTS-LA hosted a highly successful virtual job fair.
- The WTS-LA Scholarship and Awards Dinner set a record once again, awarding \$105,000 in 13 different scholarships to deserving young women. As an organization, WTS bestows more than \$600,000 in scholarships annually, meaning WTS-LA comprises approximately 17% (Remarkable!) of scholarships awarded each year by WTS.

- WTS-LA created and awarded the inaugural Going the Distance award. Honoring Lois Cooper, the first African American woman to earn her PE license in California, the first ever Going the Distance award went to John Fasana, a 27-year Metro board member.
- The Legislative Committee held two informative lunchtime programs around CEQA Streamlining for Transportation Projects and Federal Transportation Policy Developments.
- The Communications Committee spread WTS-LA news through hundreds of social media posts, monthly newsletters, and created a new Fast Feature Friday email.

For a normal year, those are phenomenal accomplishments. Viewed through the prism of what we've all endured over the past year, and, well, I am extremely proud of us all. But a list like that begs a question: what's next?

So, how do we follow a year like that? Well, first we must all prepare for the unknown. If the past year taught us anything it's that we must plan for the worst and hope for the best. A wise person said, "Tomorrow is promised to no one." So, while we certainly must plan and prepare, we must also realize that life is filled with surprises, both good and bad. So, plan, prepare, and be ready to have all of those plans and that preparation be discarded when unpredictable events transpire. More practically, what does that mean for WTS-LA?

I have two basic goals for the chapter next year. First, I want to increase membership. Year in and year out, WTS-LA demonstrates its value to the transportation industry. I want to stretch our definition of the transportation industry and reach farther into areas where we lack real representation. Of course, I also want to continue to expand in areas where we are well represented, and I believe that combination can truly make a difference for us all.

Second, I want to enhance the value WTS-LA brings to its members. Networking? Great. Camaraderie? Unparalleled. Helping the next generation of transportation professionals? Superlative. But what else? What else can we do for you and other members to bring greater value to the chapter? That is not a rhetorical question. Email me ([President@wtsla.org](mailto:President@wtsla.org)). Tell me. Let me know what you think will make the chapter better and together we can make it happen.

Another year has passed and not only have we survived, but we have also thrived. So, let's take all of that determination and positive energy and use it to fill this year with joy and success and engagement with each other. Happy New Year. And thank you.

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