

Memorandum

To: Todd Muck, Deputy Executive Director
From: Christina Watson, Principal Transportation Planner
Meeting Date: June 23, 2021
Subject: 2021 WTS International Conference

From May 11-14, 2021, I participated in the virtual WTS International Conference. Sessions I attended included the following:

- **21st Century Executive Leadership Team: Diversity and Inclusion:** CA High-Speed Rail Authority Chief Executive Officer Brian Kelly spoke about the importance of a department or organization reflecting the diversity of the community it serves.
- **Remote Possibilities: Transportation in the Age of Working Remotely:** A long-lasting effect of COVID on transportation choices will be the increasing push to enabling remote work in certain fields, which will have an impact on transportation planning decisions.
- **Welcome & General Session with Keynote Speaker Carla Harris,** who addressed the importance of authenticity at the workplace and finding a trusted mentor.
- **How to Commit to Being an Active Participant in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Efforts:** The panel discussed the importance of having a DE&I action plan with measurable annual goals.
- **US Department of Transportation Panel:**
 - Polly Trottenberg, Deputy Transportation Secretary
 - Stephanie Pollack, Acting FHWA Administrator
 - Meera Joshi, Acting Administrator, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
 - Brad Mims, Deputy FAA Administrator
 - (Nuria Fernandez, Acting FTA Administrator missed the panel due to having her hearing at the same time)
 - Key Biden priorities: climate, equity & safety
- **The End of the Old Boys' Club:** Panelists stressed the importance of succession planning, mentors, and sponsors to help young team members gain experience in their career and succeed.
- **The Future Starts Now: Developing a Workforce that Represents the Communities We Serve:** Women often find themselves the only woman in the transportation room, even still today (per

one study, only 15% of the transportation workforce are women). Developing a diverse workforce is important to the success of the project and the team.

- **Conversations with Transportation CEOs:** An impressive lineup of transit/transportation CEOs talked about breaking through glass ceilings and helping one another. Key quote: help other women fix their crowns without letting the world know they are crooked. One pandemic-specific recommendation is to counsel team members to block the time on their calendars to help their kids with schoolwork and show they are trusted to finish their work despite the many other demands on their time.
- **The Texas Two Step- Getting to YES on Austin's Transit and Transportation Referendums through Innovation and Engagement:** After two attempts (2001 and 2014), Austin finally passed 2 transit/transportation referenda in 2020, during the pandemic. The team discussed lessons learned from the prior efforts and how they responded to public input. The 2020 referenda were far more ambitious than the prior efforts, and were developed in concert with coordination efforts with federal funding agencies.
- **Women of the Year Panel:** Transportation leaders who have won WTS "Woman of the Year" recognition discussed their career paths and how challenges and change can lead to growth. "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Key career strengths are resilience, endurance, perspective, self-care, and courage.
- **Accelerating the Cultural Shift: influencing gender equality from the ranks of emerging leaders and persuading our organizations to be more diverse and inclusive:** A panel of emerging leaders encouraged participants to speak up, participate, make connections, and follow your values.
- **The Future of Rail around our Nation's Capital:** The century-old DC-area rail network can't sustain the recent and anticipated future increased travel demand in the 3-state area. The projects are ambitious, complex, and have huge numbers of stakeholder agencies and entities.
- **Take control! You are in charge of your transportation career:** A panel of women leaders discussed the role in their careers of mentors, whether formal or informal, and learning to delegate and be authentic in the workplace. Reframing critiques with the help of a support network helps to identify your strengths and defy stereotypes.
- **General Session:** Featured Speaker Helen Kerr, KerrSmith Design, talked about the speed of cultural shift over the last 30 years and how that makes predictions for future travel challenging.

The final program of the conference is available on the website,

<https://www.flipgorilla.com/p/26675824929293493/show#/26675824929293493/10>.