Women Lead the Way in Community Mobility

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TRB's 6th Women's Issues in Transportation Conference
Irvine, Calif.
Who We Are
CTAA’s Interest
Method

- Interviewed 14 women that represented diverse geographic regions, ages, and transportation experiences
- Women were selected via recommendation from colleagues, CTAA members, or other transportation professionals
- Each interview lasted between 15 – 45 minutes and covered 5 questions
- Each interviewee shared a photo with us after the interview for publication with their quote
Goals

1. To celebrate the diverse power of women in transit
2. To capture the unique and powerful attributes they bring to their work, their agency, and the field as a whole
3. To learn how the transportation field has been impacted from their experience, leadership, inclusivity, enthusiasm, tenacity, and passion; we can feel how the field is better for it
4. To provoke further discussion on the role of women across all aspects of transportation
Jill Drury

Transit Manager at Charlevoix County Transit

Michigan
“Here in Michigan we have a large number of women who are transit managers. In my early years in the transit industry, that was one thing that I always notice when I would attend meetings; the number of women that were there. It was a good feeling to see that you didn’t have to be a male to be an executive in the industry.”
Zoe Miller

Senior Project Manager & Public Health Specialist at the Greater Portland Council of Governments

Maine
“I graduated with a bachelor's in Women Studies and I still think about gender dynamics all the time. It was an eye opening experience to me because it was learning about the -isms, 'why is the world the way it is?' and 'what does gender have to do with that?' I think that for me, I am really motivated to do [inclusive planning] work because of social justice and equity issues. I think gender equity is a big part of that.”
Amy DeWitt-Smith

Executive Director at Neighbor Network of Northern Nevada

Nevada
"When I was working for the state, and pregnant with my fifth child, we proposed and piloted across the whole department a babies at work policy. I think that by pushing to have those family friendly types of policies and programs, we are going to increase the number of really talented women in the sector and in the program. If a woman sees a gap or a lack of support that would help her be a better worker, she should ask the question, 'why don’t we do this?' or 'why don’t we try this?' If we can continue this dialogue, ask these questions, we can continue to be better."
Jaime McKay

WSP supporting Maryland Transit Administration

Maryland
“For my first position, which was primarily working on the fleet management side of transit, it was a very heavily male industry. I had to be 110 percent all day every day, no matter what. I was the only woman at the table in that job. Being a woman has made me more empathetic, allowed me to bring more diverse voices to table, and has impacted how I staff my projects. I have the distinct honor of working with numerous strong women in my current role and am learning so much from them.”
Angel Bond

Mobility for All Program Manager in Boulder County

Colorado
“One of the most impactful parts of my job has been working with the local domestic violence program. I worked with a single mom, who had some disabilities she was doing physical therapy for. She had recently moved to a housing authority location where I have an unlimited transit pass program. Before she had to ration out her transportation and couldn’t go to physical therapy as often as she needed, but now that she had this pass she could go anywhere she wanted. Transportation can be really liberating for women in difficult situations, especially if they are transitioning to living on their own.”
Tiffany Chaffee
Operations Manager at Town and Country
Pennsylvania
“Being a woman gives you a different perspective. Sometimes there is often the stereotype between men and women and at the end of the day, those who work in transportation, particularly at the smaller operations, are very empathetic to people’s situations. At least for me, being a woman and being more emphatic has helped me a lot. It has made making tough decisions a little harder, but getting to know people in that way has helped a lot.”
Sheila Gombita

Executive Director at Washington County Transportation Authority

Pennsylvania
“There are a significant number of opportunities for women in transportation, and public transportation in particular. Women are very passionate, and this is a service industry in the fact that we are providing a service to people who in most cases don’t have access to any other form of transportation. Women feel for those individuals who are on that other side and who need our services. For this reason, I feel that women fit really well in the transit industry.”
Jan Ollivier

Director of Transportation at People for People

Washington
“One of my first jobs was in transportation planning. I was surrounded by people who knew the business and who were mainly men. I felt insecure and thought I needed more education. I went back to school and got my masters in civil engineering. That feeling of accomplishment, even if that information wasn’t something I could use all the time, and having that faith in yourself, lead to me not being discouraged by those around me who have all these great accomplishment.”
Mary Jo Morandini

General Manager at Beaver County Transit Authority

Pennsylvania
“We have a lot of females at our organization. Females are a very good fit in the transit industry. Whether its fixed-route, shared-ride or specialized, I think that females tend to be a very good fit.”
Amy Biggs

Director of Transportation at Snoqualmie Valley Transit

Washington
“Men seem to over-populate industries involving vehicles as a central focus. Same with the oversight agencies. But it’s changing. You know, it’s not about the vehicles. It’s about business systems and logistics and it’s so much fun. If everyone saw transit as a basic human service, there would be even more women involved. This is a job that has an actual impact on the world around us. If people get hung up on the vehicle aspect of it, they are completely missing the point.”
Ann August

former Executive Director of Santee Wateree Regional Transportation Authority

South Carolina
"Diversify your skill set. A lot of times, we get pigeon-holed and work in one area for a while. Do some lateral moves in order to learn new things. I once transitioned from maintenance to rail. It was a lateral move, it wasn’t a promotion, but it gave me the opportunity to meet new people and learn new skills. Once you gain those skills, nobody can take those from you."
Jane Hardin

Project Specialist at CTAA

District of Columbia
“A significant portion of leaders and creators of community transportation are women. My favorite story about this is based in the southeastern part of Missouri. In the late 1950s, farm wives were dealing with their husbands aging out of their personal vehicles. It was this realization, and the necessity of needing to get to the places they had to go, that brought these women together to form what became one of the largest rural transportation systems...OATS.”
Kendra McGeady

Director of Transit at Pelivan Transit/NEO Tribal Transit Consortium

Oklahoma
“Embracing your womanhood is a sure path to success. Build a positive reputation for yourself for being hardworking, trust your instincts, be confident in your decisions and always play to your natural abilities. If you are empathetic or a good listener by nature then incorporate that into your professional life. A successful woman uses all of her strengths. Believe in yourself and you will be successful regardless of what the gender is around you.”
Julie Wilke

CEO at Ride Connection

Oregon
“Women in general are insightful and creative, clearly and quickly see what needs to be accomplished, know how to empower others, and approach leadership roles differently. It could be the ever constant struggle between the work life balances that makes us efficient, it could our empathy from raising families that give us the ability to empower others naturally, or it could be our history which has given us perseverance to be bold. We want to be bold and take risks, even if challenges face us. Women don't think of challenges as brick walls. The women I respect and admire, look at this challenge and turn it into an opportunity.”
Trends and Patterns

- Non-transit backgrounds
- Wore many hats throughout the system
- Encourage diversity
- Women helping Women
- Empathy for community
- Transit is still a man’s game
- Personal
- Independent and innovative thinkers
- Connectors and bridge builders
- Courage and confidence
“People don’t care about what you know, they care about whether or not you care.”

“You have to be yourself, don’t fall into the trap of trying to be something that someone else wants you to be”

“Do not fall into the trap of speaking jargon, speak in the language everyone can understand.”

“Bring your non-transportation skills and expertise to the table. Your background is far more helpful than what can be studied in books.”

“Building a positive reputation for yourself is about playing to your strengths. “

“Ask the right questions, and focus on the real problems”

“Diversify your skillset. It is okay to do some lateral moves in order to learn something”

“Say yes to everything because you don’t know what you could get out of it. Showing up to support others will always come back ten-fold.”
Future Plans

- Continue this project on behalf of CTAA
- Web-based platform
- Extend and increase the number of women we can interview
- Do you have recommendations of women we should talk to? Email us!
Questions?

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