

# WTS Celebrates 40 Years of Carving a Path for Women in Transportation

It's been 40 years since 40 women founded the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS), an organization designed to help them navigate the male-dominated field of transportation. They wanted help with professional advancement and saw a need to develop industry and government recognition of the growing number woman in the transportation field. Founders selected the group's name because women couldn't get their companies to pay for association memberships in 1977 unless the association's primary focus was education.

Today, with chapters around the U.S., Canada and Great Britain, WTS has more than 6,500 members and provides opportunities for both men and women. California is home to nine WTS chapters including the San Francisco Bay Area chapter. It's known for a mentoring program, which pairs individuals with seasoned professionals and professional development, which focuses on specific topics such as resume writing, how to work a room and breaking the glass ceiling.

Charissa Frank was a Principal at FMG Architects, a small, woman owned business focusing on architecture design in transportation, when she became the president of the San Francisco chapter in 2013-2014. She had been in the transportation industry for 20 years. "During my tenure, we rolled out a leadership development and training program for women in transportation," Frank explained. The program, called Women's Leadership Program (WLP), teaches women how to step into their own power, own their strengths and develop their leadership style. It wasn't long before the chapter introduced another module focusing on Executive Women's Leadership, which includes training and coaching.

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Frank is still a member of the chapter's board. "This year, we are in the early stages of developing the curriculum in collaboration with educators from Stanford University's School of Business," Frank said. "I'm leading the SF Bay Area chapter in developing a training course for small business growth strategies."

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Charissa Frank  
Board Member  
WTS – San Francisco



She also sits on Business Advisory Councils for the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) and the California High-Speed Rail Authority. She explained she's looking forward to taking high-speed rail as she travels to business meetings around the state. "It will reduce the amount of vehicle congestion, hopefully resulting in a more sustainable environment," Frank said.

Meanwhile, she and her colleagues at WTS will keep fighting to increase small business goals and the number of women in the transportation field. "Women tend to choose the planning field more than engineering skills," said Jean Banker, treasurer of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter. "More are also needed on the technology side of transportation. If the future of our mobility is driverless technology and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), we need a diverse set of people creating and implementing that vision so it is a success." To learn more about WTS visit:

<https://www.wtsinternational.org/>

Karen Massie



Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) – San Francisco Board Member Charissa Frank (third from left) joined other WTS members and transportation industry colleagues on a panel which discussed ways to be a winner in the competitive bidding process for public infrastructure projects. Frank said, although women have made great strides over the years, WTS will continue to provide training and mentoring programs designed to increase opportunities for small businesses and women in the field of transportation.