

Moving Forward

MTI Alumni Association Newsletter

Winter 2015/2016



Contacting the Alumni Association

Alumni Association website at:
www.mticonnect.org

E-mail to :
mticonnect@gmail.com

Highlights

Capstone Coaches needed for spring 2016 semester.

What do you think? Alumni survey results.

Save the Date!

2016 MTI Convocation and Graduation Ceremony, Saturday, June 18.

From the President

Dear MTI Current Students and Alumni,

As the holiday season is upon us, now is a good time to look back on the previous year and give thanks. My heart is full of gratitude to Rod Diridon and Karen Philbrick for their vision and leadership at MTI, and to everyone who has worked diligently to make MTI's research and academic programs a success. Having attended several MTI convocation ceremonies for new graduates of the MSTM Program, I feel continually inspired by the students and instructors in the program.

I would also like to thank the Leadership Team of the MTI Alumni Association (MTIAA), who continually donate their time and talents to put on events, publish newsletters, and maintain our web site. Donna Maurillo ('11), Ann Calnan ('12), Ward Thomas ('15), Brandi Childress ('08), Walt Allen ('07), and myself ('11) continue to serve, and this year we are joined by Olivia Rocha ('15). For the past few years, Walt Allen has served admirably as our dedicated, organized, and always optimistic President, keeping everyone "on board" but never "bored." Walt has passed on the reins to me this year, and I have big shoes to fill.

For those who have recently graduated with your Master's Degree, I would like to welcome you to the MTIAA. You have joined an elite group of transportation managers and professionals. We hope that the association will help you connect with the rich network of alumni in the transportation industry. Current students, we would like to be a resource for you, too.

The end of the year is also an appropriate time to look toward the New Year and where we want to go. In the upcoming year, we are launching a Capstone Coach program, taking nominations for the next MTI Alum of the Year, planning cross-networking events with other transportation professionals, and setting up local alumni events. We are updating our web site so that it can be a resource for the aforementioned items, photos from past convocation ceremonies, archived newsletters, and more. If you would like to join the MTIAA Leadership Team, please don't hesitate to contact us at mticonnect@gmail.com. We are especially in need of "local representatives" for cross-networking events and "journalists" for our newsletter. If you've got an idea for a newsletter story (example: MTI alum receiving a prestigious award or landing a really cool job), feel free to contact us.

Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season!

- Rachel Donovan



MTI Alumni plus VIP (from left to right) Donna Maurillo, Rachel Donovan, Viviann Ferea, Ann Calnan, and Walt Allen

A Record Number of Grads Earned Their Hoods

MTI's annual awards banquet and convocation was held on the evening of June 27 at the San Jose State Student Union. We hooded our 21 newest masters' degree candidates (a record!), with Allie Scrivener as valedictorian. U.S. Transportation Secretary (ret) Norman Mineta and California State Senator Jim Beall delivered the keynote addresses. Our alumni table definitely was enthusiastic and fun.

Sponsorships for the event raised a record-breaking \$108,800 for MSTM fellowships, which will help current students complete their degrees with minimum out-of-pocket expense. If your business or employer would like to be a sponsor next year, MTI would appreciate the help when we call around March 2016.



Also at the banquet, we honored the winners of the Garrett Morgan Sustainable Transportation Competition. These were seventh-graders from Guntown Middle School in Guntown, Miss. They developed an idea for hydrogen cell refueling stations. After winning the Garrett Morgan competition, they went on to win third place in a bridge design competition sponsored by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials. Smart kids!

Capstone Coaches Needed for Spring 2016

The Capstone is the culminating academic achievement of the Master of Science in Transportation Management (MSTM) program. To help current students get through the process, MTIAA is creating a Capstone Coach Directory, which will be a list of MSTM graduates available to help with Capstone topics, research methods, and presentations, as well as to offer general support.

The Capstone Coach Directory will be password protected and accessible only to current students and alumni. If you're an MSTM graduate and would like to add your name to the list, please send your information (name, e-mail, MSTM graduation year, areas of expertise, and "Linked In" profile) to mticonnect@gmail.com. Please visit www.mticonnect.org/capstone-coach/ to view the Capstone Coach Directory.

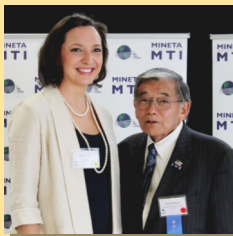
The Capstone Course: Strategic Management in Transportation (MTM 290) is offered in the Spring

Semester each year, so you can expect the majority of student inquiries during that time. Capstone Coaches, please make time in your schedule for a meaningful interaction with a student at least once per month. There are no requirements to be a Capstone Coach besides your willingness to work with a student to help him or her achieve success!



WE NEED YOU!

Congratulations to Alumna of the Year 2015 Donna DeMartino



Donna DeMartino, General Manager of the San Joaquin RTD, joined the agency in 2001 as Assistant General Manager. She brings more than 20 years of supervisory and management experience in the transit industry. Prior to joining RTD, she served at the Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT), where she spent five years as part of the light rail startup team.

Donna earned a Bachelor's Degree in education from CSU Sacramento, and a Master's Degree in transportation management from the Mineta Transportation Institute. She obtained a teaching credential while at CSU Sacramento, and completed a construction management program at UC Davis. Ms. DeMartino is a Fellow of the Eno Transportation Foundation, and a graduate of the Leadership APTA (American Public Transportation Association) program. She serves on the California Transit Association's Executive Committee, and she teaches classes for SJSU, University of the Pacific, and other academic institutions.

The California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CalACT) named her the 2009 Transportation Manager of the Year. In 2006, Metro Magazine highlighted her achievements in an article on five "Women in Transportation" who "play a major role in the transportation industry." In 2013, the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce honored her with the Business Manager of the Year Award. In 2015, the Mineta Transportation Institute honored her as the Alumna of the Year for all her accomplishments and contributions to the transportation industry.

To get to know her a bit better, we asked her a few questions:



Please tell us a bit about your career path.

Like so many others, I accidentally happened into public transit. I was a full-time elementary school teacher and a single mom of 6. I started driving a bus part-time at Sacramento Regional Transit to earn extra income for my family. After being there about 6 months, I applied for a full-time position on Sacramento's new light rail project. I was selected to be part of that first light rail project team and quickly fell in love with public transportation. I went back to college and completed a construction management program at UC Davis and then my MS at MTI.

From my bio, you can see that while at RT, I also worked in the Operations Support, Engineering and Construction, and Facilities Management Departments, where my responsibilities included capital facilities management, contract administration, and project management. I was at RT a little over 14 years when I decided to look for new opportunities.

I was offered a job at a consulting firm and at San Joaquin RTD. I accepted the job of AGM at RTD, with absolutely no ambition of becoming the GM, but 9 months after I arrived the GM passed away suddenly and unexpectedly. His death occurred just one week after September 11, 2001. It was a shocking and surreal time for all of us already, but losing the agency's GM of 11 years on

continued next page

Congratulations to Donna DeMartino (continued)

top of that was extra hard on our employees. My network of transit colleagues (especially my Leadership APTA classmates) offered lots of help and advice as I navigated through some challenging and uncharted territory the first few days. The Board appointed me as acting GM immediately and then offered me the position permanently two months later.

Growing up, what did you want to be?

I always considered non-traditional roles. I loved math and science and thought I might be a scientist. I never envisioned being the mother of such a large family and the GM of a transit agency, but I am so thankful for both experiences.

What has been your biggest challenge professionally?

Losing 25% of our operating budget during the most recent economic recession was the toughest professional challenge, but hopefully that is not something all transit professionals will have to face. For your readers, I would like to address one of the biggest challenges we all face as transit leaders, and that is the initial resistance from our local communities for important projects such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). I remember it was the same for the Light Rail project in Sacramento. It seemed almost everybody in the community thought BRT in Stockton or Light Rail in Sacramento was a crazy idea – until we built it. Now the communities love these services. It would be easy to get discouraged by the skeptics; it takes courage to push forward and deliver these successful projects to our communities.

You are a woman who has assumed a top leadership role. What needs to happen to get more women in corporate leadership roles?

We have a lot of work to do in our industry. Based on my observations, women still hold only about 20% of the top leadership positions in public transit. I would love to see more women encouraged to rise through the ranks at our agencies. There are some good professional development programs available, but we



need more, and we need to work aggressively to identify and encourage capable young women. I know that the programs offered at MTI can be immensely helpful for women seeking transit leadership roles.

What do you think the most important quality is to have as a leader?

I believe the most important quality is to have a vision. We must pay attention to the changing needs of our dynamic communities and look for ways to make public transit more efficient, effective, and relevant. We must also look for ways to help bring discretionary federal and state investments to our communities to ensure public transit enhances economic development – not just getting people to work, but putting them to work as well.

Where do you like during your downtime?

I love to spend time with my family. My family of 6 children has expanded to include 12 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and some amazing sons-in-law.

What is your favorite gadget?

Oh – that would have to be my iPhone 6plus. Who knew I would have a handheld device that would allow me to carry over 7000 photos with me at all times, in addition to storing and playing my favorite music, giving me audible driving directions, allowing me to keep connected with multiple email accounts and texts, serving as my alarm clock, and so, so much more??

Who inspires you?

Strong-willed, positive, and kind people inspire me. Recently I went to hear Amy Purdy and Supreme Court Justice Sotomayer speak. To hear how these women overcame unbelievable adversity to achieve success for not only themselves but for others as well inspires me to try harder to help and encourage others.

New MTI Alumni Chapters Coming Your Way

While still under development and soon to be announced on the MTI Connect website, we look forward to new Alumni Association Chapters in the State. Look for a Sacramento Chapter and Southern California Chapter in the near future.



Are you moving up in your career? Let the MTI Alumni Association know so we can acknowledge your achievement in the next newsletter and on the web.

Results from MSTM Alumni Survey



The MTIAA Leadership Team sent a survey request to graduates of the Masters of Science in Transportation Management (MSTM) and received responses from about 25%. See below for a summary of the information gleaned from the survey.

We were very surprised to see that 90% of alumni would consider working toward **additional certificates**. One-third of you definitely would become **Capstone Coaches for students**, and nearly 40% would like to know more.

For social events, **happy hours** came out on top, with nearly 70% preferring that. **Barbecues and picnics** got 57% of the vote, and **sports** came in with 36%. **Hiking/biking** was also popular with 30%. But **concerts/clubs** (26%) and movies/plays (19%) also had decent showings. Only 9% didn't want any social events.

We will be awarding an Alumnus or Alumna of the Year at the annual banquet in June, and 37% said they would not want to help. A little more than 33% said it depends on the amount of work, and 18% were **definitely interested**. That's fine because we need only a few people, and it's not much of a time commitment.

Almost two-thirds of respondents would definitely attend the annual **graduation banquet** if the day included **alumni activities**. If their dinner could be sponsored, another 16% would attend, and 9% would show up even without activities.

Aside from social activities, a whopping 81% of you said you wanted **career development networking activities**. Everything else was over the 50% mark, as well, including **topical issues discussions** (66%), **research insights** (60%), **technical discussions** (57%), and **personal growth training** (51%).

Finally, 37% were not sure if they would attend a meeting to discuss research or faculty findings. Those responding with "yes, definitely" and "it depends on the speaker" tied at 32% each. Another 16% would attend if it were after work hours, and 2% said they'd **help organize**. "Not interested" came in at 8%.

The narrative comments included requests for more **professional development** and guidance; a desire for more **technical classes** in the MSTM program; a request for more alumni **activities around the state** and not just in San Jose; a comment about tech difficulties.

Thank you to everyone who took the survey. We will begin to start working on areas of particular interest. If you have any more ideas or other suggestion, please contact the MTIAA Leadership Team at mticonnect@gmail.com.



Acronym Mixer Happy Hour

Happy hours are even happier when they include a variety of transportation professionals. To mix things up a bit, our next happy hour event will bring together MTI Alumni and current students, as well as others from such fine organizations as WTS, AEP, ASCE, ITE, and others. The details are not worked out yet, but will be posted on the MTI Connect website when available. An announcement will also go out by e-mail.



MTI Alumni Association
San Jose, California

<http://www.mticonnect.org>

MTI MSTM Class of 2015—Congratulations!



We would love to hear from you! Tell us what you have been up to since you graduated. Send your update to:
mticonnect@gmail.com.

