

# Inland Empire Regional Mobility Dialogue Series

## Results and Summary



Leadership in the  
Transportation Sector:  
How to Envision Change  
in the I.E.

Dec 10, 2019

## Introduction

Strong leadership in the transportation industry is imperative now more than ever. The transportation industry has undergone rapid changes in the face of globalization, digitization, and the emergence of new and innovative service offerings leading to entirely new business models. Leaders must collaborate with industry organizations and follow current events to help stay up to date on issues affecting rapidly evolving transportation sector.

This Dialogue focused on what leadership looks like in the transportation field and what we need from our leaders moving forward.

There were two experts/leaders representing the public and private sector for this Dialogue. They included:

- Fran Inman, Chair of the California Transportation Commission and Senior Vice President, Majestic Realty,
- B.J. Patterson, CEO, Pacific Mountain Logistics

A few of the main takeaways from the discussion included a determination of what is needed from our future leaders to move the transportation industry forward. Our experts also explored important qualities needed in future leaders in order for them to be successful in guiding the future workforce and adapt to a rapidly changing transportation sector. Overall, these two leaders hope to instill knowledge and confidence into the next generation of leaders in the transportation sector.

### Fran Inman, Chair of the California Transportation and Senior Vice President, Majestic Realty

Leading the first discussion was Fran Inman, Chair of the California Transportation Commission and Senior Vice President of Majestic Realty. Fran has been a leader in the transportation sector for over 30 years and serves on a total of 19 boards. Among many approaches to building rapport and trust amongst leaders, one simple tactic Inman believes is useful is sitting around the table and sharing a meal with one another. Inman shared her experiences, stating that “there is something magic about sitting around a round table, sharing a meal. When we first started doing this with the Staples Center I had to go out and of course I had no clue about workforce development. I had to figure that out. I went around LA and talked to all these silo organizations. With all due respect to my nonprofit sector partners, they can be really territorial too, everyone is in survival mode and they weren’t talking to each other and I brought everyone together.” Finding natural ways for peers and fellow leaders to collaborate, work together, and build trust can make significant differences in how teams are able to meet goals together. A successful leader must be able to work with diverse minds. Leadership is a skill that needs to be harnessed and leaders at all levels should be dynamic and able to cater to both a variety of situations and a range of personalities. Inman is very passionate about transportation – both moving goods and moving people. “You know for one thing in leadership if you can’t be passionate about what you are doing, don’t do that, find something that you are passionate about because I don’t think you will succeed,” said Inman.

Networking is another important aspect of being a successful leader, both of which are about forming professional relationships. These connections leave touchpoints for leaders to use in the future. Inman’s transportation journey began with a company on a one-off project. She initially started in the hospitality industry and discovered she loved to build things.

“I think this is a great time to be in transportation,” said Inman, “because we have a lot of problems to solve.” In an industry where the dynamics are changing so quickly, leaders have to be able to find solutions to unexpected problems as they arise. Inman continued, “I think that if you look at where we have been to where we are going, I can only imagine... we are going to have to figure out what our world is going to look like.”

Inman believes that it is critical for leaders and governments to focus on energy and transportation as well as how to build the necessary infrastructure to support growing transit needs. She also adds that it will not be an easy road as there are many challenges that lie ahead. Inman referenced Doran Barnes, CEO of Foothill Transit, saying “Doran and I have been on this journey together. In working on the electric buses, when going down the energy journey, ‘okay Doran is really good at transit and Fran is really good at getting things done.’ There is a lot that we have to do collectively as we go down the energy journey that we are all on, and it takes working together to get it done. I’d say stay tuned on that one, I am not sure what that roads going to be, but I bet you a dollar it is not a straight line.” With this anecdote, Inman shared the benefits of cultivating teams with diverse strengths in order to solve complex problems in transportation, many of which have not even been realized yet and will continue to reveal themselves with ongoing transit developments and further evolution.

In the transportation space, Inman says that funds have been forthcoming. “In terms of transportation, clearly these last few years at the CTC have been like no other. We have been blessed to have money and we have the ability to really get some projects out the door.” Case in point, Inman mentioned that the CTC had to ensure that the infrastructure is in good repair and that capacity demands are kept up with. With more available funding, much more can be done to address these infrastructure needs but it requires a good leader to see such large projects through. She also notes that getting projects done on in the public sector is very different than in the private sector. With the private sector, “it is a much straighter line on how we do on these major projects.”

A challenge that leaders face is equity, which is the fairness and equality in the distribution of public resources across groups. Inman states that “when money comes into the equation, it brings out maybe not the best in everybody. I have said at the commission, we all got along together when we were poor but we are working through all of that. I think that the other challenge too is that the needs are huge. The good news is we got some new funding, the bad news is every program had a five to ten to one over subscription, so there is no way. We talked our partners into, let’s agree on some prioritization and how we will work through this, but it is tough to be patient. It’s tough when you’re stuck in gridlock. We have got challenges in every corner of this state, so hopefully we are doing our best to try and be equitable and make sure that no one gets left behind.”

In the transportation industry, recent and relevant data are crucial. Inman states that the data published by government agencies is usually not current and is beginning to lag farther and farther behind so problems as they are actively presenting are not being solved. “The good ole US Bureau of Transportation standards publishes their commodity flows twice every two years, and it takes them two years to publish it? And I have said this in DC, ‘thanks for the info, but there is no way I am taking this to my boss and saying here is the hot news, this happened two years ago.’”

Inman also calls for a need to use technology to propel both transportation and society forward. Leaders must be open to new ideas and plan ahead. Inman explains that “the better we can do to weave in that technology component, clearly whether it’s the goods movement, we have got huge volumes coming

our way. We have historically made that an afterthought and that's not good for all of us. Planning early and planning often. Just to the leadership, if there is an open window, step through it. That backpack full of knowledge, just put that down,"

#### B.J. Patterson, CEO, Pacific Mountain Logistics

Adding to the discussion, B.J. Patterson, CEO, Pacific Mountain Logistics, has been in the logistics, distribution and transportation industry for almost three decades. After fighting in Operation: Desert Storm as a Navy Seal, Patterson returned home without many opportunities in the workforce. He had picked up a few small jobs including bodyguard and security work until he stumbled into a temporary manager position at Target's distribution network.

At the time, Patterson said, "Warehouse? I don't know anything about warehousing. That sounds like the dumbest thing ever but, I don't have anything to do, so I might as well do it. I was there like seven years I think, so you know I kind of tripped into logistics. What I found was, it is an industry that I am completely passionate about," Patterson's passion grew as time passed and he stressed how much that has made him a leader. He stressed that leaders must both love and believe in what they do.

Patterson also discussed the significance the transportation industry has on daily lives as well as the economy as a whole, which is arguably more than many other industries currently operating. "I love this industry and I say all the time that I don't think any industry impacts the daily economy and quality of life more than we do. I tell people all the time who say that they hate trucks, let's go a week without a truck and see what happens. The economy would collapse, and we would all perish because we wouldn't have any food or God forbid we wouldn't have our Starbucks coffee."

Change in the transportation industry is happening at a meteoric rate and Patterson understands this very well. "I say that after almost 30 years now of doing this, is that it is changing so quickly, it is at light speed. I mean the changes that are happening daily, it is not even a weekly thing, or monthly, or annually. I think you know, much like what Fran said about this backpack of what we did yesterday, you know it just doesn't work" said Patterson. He also adds that, with change, a leader must be able to be agile and flexible, stating that "from a leadership perspective it is all about flexibility and nimbleness and the ability to change quickly and rapidly."

For example, consumers want fast shipping for little to no cost. As consumers demand more, leaders must find a way to innovate and meet new customer needs as the industry evolves. One of these ways is technology. Patterson stated that, "Some smart guy is going to come up and say, okay we can do this. Ideas of transportation are completely different now than they were just five years ago. Five years ago, there was no Uber, Lyft, Uber Freight. All these other types of, I call them collaborative transportation solutions, they are not your typical, 'Hey, let's hire Bob's Trucking Company to move it from point A to Point Z.' It's looking at what is available, 'Hey, I got a guy available that is three blocks away and he can take the load.' It's the technology, the mobile technology, the connective tissue of the system."

Patterson added that the old transport systems are just not flexible and nimble enough. The old systems, which are filled with regulations and barriers, are going to hinder progress. There is a need for new systems for leaders to be able to successfully connect. Connectivity and the ease of use plays an important role in the development of new and effective systems. "That is what we talk about a lot, how do we connect availability to need? I need to move this load from here to there, I need to move this

person from here to there. I think that is what Uber did. Uber did two things. One, they were very good about connecting need to availability. And, on top of that, ease of use. You know I read an article the other day that said Uber and Lyft have done more to reduce drunk driving than all of MADD programs in last 20 years. You know what? Because it is very easy. You know no one wants to call a cab. No one wants to figure that out, but you know Uber is a press of a button,” said Patterson. Patterson added that this same concept can be applied to freight and transportation. To compare, Patterson stated “we can move people very easily with this system. How do we move freight? Now there comes more complications with that, whether it is tariffs or legalities and the bureaucracy that goes to that, but I think that is where we need leadership. How do we disentangle all those things to make this availability and need meet in a seamless, easy way?” The important question is to explore how we “marry up” availability to need at a sped-up process?

Patterson stated part of being a leader is adapting to changes and regulations. “Those who adapt to it will survive, those who don’t, won’t. I tend to try and be a survivor, so you just have to adapt. I mean you may not like it, but at the end of the day you have to adapt. Adapt and overcome. We have to figure out how to adapt using the regulations that we have got... we need young leadership behind the scenes,” Patterson said.

Another area in which Patterson is an advocate is workforce development. He is chair of the youth committee and vice chair of the executive committee at the San Bernardino Workforce Development Board. Patterson believes that career readiness is crucial in preparing young people to learn about and eventually be involved in the logistics and transportation industries. “From a leadership perspective, one of the biggest things we need is this, how do we teach the young people today of the needs to get into this industry? Transportation and logistics needs the young people. We need the youth because us old guys at some point we want to retire, we want to take our golf cart and go home. But we need the youth in this industry, and we need their leadership because they see things from a very different perspective than we do,” said Patterson.

Patterson believes that there is a need to connect with young people early, such as when they are in elementary school, to start educating them about a career in transportation and logistics. He asked, “How do we get them to understand?” and added, “Because the workforce of tomorrow doesn’t look very different from the workforce of today. Again, if you get back to availability and need, we have to look at it very differently. We have to educate these kids very early on that this is the industry to be in because let me tell you something, retail may go away, but logistics is not going anywhere.”

A metaphor that Patterson used was that the warehouse is the new mall. E-commerce has boomed significantly over the past decade and will continue to grow. “E-commerce is not going anywhere, it is growing. I can remember ten years ago someone told me e-commerce will never be more than ten percent of the economy. I was at a conference and it was someone I thought was really, really smart, telling me it will never be more than ten percent of the economy hands down, retail is social. Well apparently, people get pretty social at their computer with a wine glass in their hand and they don’t need to go to the mall,” said Patterson.

Patterson explained that “leadership is the ability to think. Thinking outside the box doesn’t quite get you there, it is being able to think about a completely new reality. Having the mindset of, I need to figure out something that I don’t even know what it is I need to figure out.” Patterson added that, as a leader, his job is to mentor people and get them to start thinking about how to work through the issues.

Someone asked Patterson if he hires someone for their experience or their “smarts,” Patterson replied, “I take smarts over experience every day because I think experience sometimes trips you up. One of our best employees was a manager at a Five Guys Burger establishment. She is smart as whip and we brought her in and boom, she is thinking of things we never thought of.” Patterson further added, “One of the things to do is invite people in from different industries, invite people in that have a completely different perspective because they see things for what they are and not what they should be. I think that is a trap that leader’s fall into all the time.” Bringing in people with different perspectives will allow leaders and industries to think differently and debate. Infusing industries with people that agree with leadership without fail stifles growth and innovation in both the short and long term.

Patterson closed by stating that “leadership in my mind is having the courage to invite opposing views. The courage to look outside what you think is normal, the courage to throw everything you know to the side and say we have to start from a clean slate. If we were starting right from the beginning, what would it look like? Forget about cost, forget about all those things, first off what should it look like? The young leaders coming up that is what they have to do, start with a clean slate and say we are starting over today. What would it look like?”

#### Moving the Dialogue Forward: Ideas from the Participants

After the presentations, the Dialogue attendees discussed the ideas presented and worked together in groups to discuss solutions for moving forward. The top ideas from each group have been categorized and summarized below.

**Skills needed by our new wave of leaders.** A number of participants discussed the skills the next generation of leaders need to be better equipped with in order to be successful.

- It is important that the younger generation is taught the skills needed to problem solve and work critically through problems, many of them do not master critical thinking skills.
- The next wave of professionals will need to be ready to navigate to change, flexible, and responsive. They will need to be able to adopt and overcome.
- Millennials should be provided ample opportunity to engage in internships and job shadowing of leaders in the transportation and logistics field in order to support classroom learning.

**Attractiveness of Transportation Sector Jobs.** Show younger generation benefits of having jobs in the transportation sector.

- Better inform youth that transit and logistics jobs can improve the community and they will bring a fresh perspective on the issues the industry is facing.
- Corporate culture needs to change to offset the negative image within the industry, which will attract a new wave of leaders.
- A lot of the time people view jobs in this industry, such as warehouse jobs, as minimum wage and it dissuades them from pursuing careers in logistics. If the younger generation can be shown that this sector has more to offer, there will be a better chance of recruiting young professionals.

*The Leonard Transportation Center (LTC) at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB), presented a bi-monthly dialogue series on topics relevant to the future of transportation in the Inland Empire. The series, which was open to the public, was sponsored by HNTB Corporation and was held every other month starting in February 2018.*

*Dialogue topics ranged from understanding the current mobility dilemma and its causes to potential solutions like congestion pricing, transit; emerging technologies such as autonomous and connected vehicles and new ways of funding transportation infrastructure. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from transportation experts and engage in vigorous discussion about the transportation challenges facing the Inland Empire.*

### **About Leonard Transportation Center**

*The Leonard Transportation Center (LTC) at California State University, San Bernardino opened in 2006 with a focus on regional transportation needs. The vision of Bill and Barbara Leonard was to create a center that focuses on the unique transportation opportunities and challenges the Inland Empire faces. Today, the LTC is working to expand its research and student engagement programs. Focal points include transportation management and governance issues, development of new technologies, and transnational studies. Their vision is to work collaboratively to seek solutions to assist residents, businesses, government and nonprofit agencies, and international partners to work together on improving sustainability and quality of life in the Inland Empire. For more information, visit.*

### **About HNTB**

*HNTB Corporation is an employee-owned infrastructure solutions firm serving public and private owners and contractors. HNTB's work in California dates back to its founding in 1914. Today, HNTB continues to grow in size and service offerings to clients in California from seven office locations, currently employing more than 350 full-time professionals. With more than a century of service, HNTB understands the life cycle of infrastructure and addresses clients' most complex technical, financial and operational challenges. Professionals nationwide deliver a full range of infrastructure-related services, including award-winning planning, design, program management and construction management. For more information, visit [www.hntb.com](http://www.hntb.com)*

### **About San Bernardino International Airport**

*Conveniently located in the heart of the Inland Empire, close to major freeways and just 60 miles from Los Angeles, San Bernardino (SBD) International Airport is strategically positioned to meet growing aviation activity, including cargo, business aviation, general aviation, and commercial airlines by providing competitive rates for aviation companies and local businesses looking to stretch their wings and expand their horizons. With extensive stretches of pristine runway and acres of prime land available for aviation development, SBD International Airport is ready to help our community and region reach new destinations.*

