



# Inclusion in Motion: Women's Voices in Commuter Transportation

**Jane Duong Davaransky**

Business Manager for Transportation Operations, Meta  
SJSU Master of Transportation Management Student

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I had been in this situation before. A long table with many chairs, each one filled by an experienced male tech professional. But I was here. I had finally made it. My hardwork and the support of allies had brought me—a Vietnamese-American woman—to the leadership table.

When I first moved into my current role in transportation operations, I sometimes felt like a bit of a unicorn as a woman, let alone an Asian-American woman. Early on, I often steeled myself, anticipating negative experiences. Thankfully, in this role I am fortunate enough to be surrounded by true allies who did not allow any unconscious bias to impede professional relationships. This fortune is not lost on me. People who are Asian make up only about [6%](#) of employees in the transportation sector. Women make up [less than a quarter](#) of the entire U.S. transportation workforce and face higher [rates of unemployment](#) in the industry than men do. Women leaders in transportation who are also Asian? That slice of the pie graph is quite small, to say the least.

In our industry, like many others, women's voices have historically gone unheard. People of color, who so often have not had a seat at the table in policy and politics, have stories untold. Even before becoming immersed in transportation, I was long involved in conversations centered on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. During my undergraduate career at Santa Clara University, I earned a bachelor's degree in finance with a minor in ethnic studies. I sat on an alumni association advisory board and led a DEI team that spearheaded a variety of initiatives focusing on true inclusion, which is so much more than tokenism or a checkbox.

Authentic allyship means speaking up for those who are different from you or those who might not have the opportunity or influence to advocate for themselves. My work championing my fellow women in transportation first happened quietly, often behind the scenes. But as I climbed the ladder, I took the hands of those around me and pulled them up alongside me. I am proud to have empowered three of my friends and colleagues to be recognized for their work with the 40-under-40 Award from the Association for Commuter Transportation. More and more women are breaking down barriers, smashing glass ceilings to take a seat at the table and—much more frequently—at the head of it.

Many of us have experienced moments in our lives that, in one way or another, ignited change. In 2015, an accident on my way home from work steered me in a direction I never saw coming. The collision, resulting from exhaustion and stress, left my vehicle and another with only minor dents. This incident, however, deeply rattled me and prompted me to start using the Stanford Marguerite shuttle for my

commute. That first ride to work ignited my passion for transit and shifted my life toward advocating for change in a new sphere.

I argued the many benefits of transit to anyone who would listen and ultimately established the Active Commuting Program for the SLAC Stanford Lab. This project, which discouraged solo driving, earned the 2018 Stanford University Employee Sustainability Award. I built a myriad of new connections both professional and personal because of transit, and although I had shifted my career in a new direction, I quickly understood my commitment to equity was relevant and universal.

After my immersion in the transportation field, I achieved the Association for Commuter Transportation – Certified Professional (TDM-CP) certificate. Soon, I will complete my Master’s in transportation management at San Jose State University. In my current role, I ensure financial investments are made that support the safety and efficiency of commuting for thousands of employees. Post-graduation from my master’s program, I aim to continue to exert all influence I can into shaping the future of commuter transportation in California and beyond and empowering my fellow women in transportation all along the way.

Personally and professionally, I am thankful and excited to see an increasing variety of faces at the transportation leadership tables. As a woman of color in a leadership position, I am committed to creating opportunities for more women of color to thrive, to make space for more diversity, inclusion, and innovation. When I think of what I can say to enable the success of those around me, I want to ask, “What would you do if you were not afraid?” It’s okay to use your voice to speak up, to ask for help for you or someone else. You can do significant good, and even help yourself, by empowering the people around you.



### About the Author

Jane Duong Davaransky is a commuter transportation and finance expert currently working in transit operators for a large Silicon Valley tech company. Her work as Founder and Manager of the SLAC Active Commuting Program at Stanford earned the 2018 Sustainable Stanford award. She is president of the SJSU Mineta Transportation Institute Student Association and will graduate from the MSTM program this June.