



A Fifty-Year Legacy of People-First Mobility

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Michael Schneider is co-founder and Senior Partner at InfraStrategies, LLC, a leading strategic advisory firm in transportation and infrastructure. With decades of executive leadership at top firms including Parsons Brinckerhoff (now WSP) and HDR, he has guided major projects worldwide and is recognized as an expert in project delivery and public-private partnerships. A frequent speaker and published author, Mike has contributed to over 150 papers and provided testimony to Congress and the White House. His career achievements have been honored with the Outstanding Public Transportation Business Member from ARTBA (2016), which is given to a public transportation business member who has made outstanding lifetime contributions to the public transportation industry, the first Lifetime Achievement Award from *Global*

Partnerships in 2021, and induction into the American Public Transportation Association Hall of Fame in 2024.

MTI recently interviewed Mike to discuss his 50 years in transportation, the lessons he has learned during his distinguished career, and what lies ahead for the field.

MTI: You have had a long and influential career in transportation. When you reflect on your career, what core purpose or vision ties it all together?

In the winter of 1982, I found myself riding a ski lift thirty times in a day—not for the enjoyment of the slopes—but to interview visitors and residents about what local transportation services meant to them, as part of a national study for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Transportation on improving access to and within our national parks and public recreation sites. That’s been the heart of my career for fifty years: listening to people, learning their stories, uplifting them, and building systems that connect them.

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Q: What changes have you seen in the industry over time?

I have been involved in advancing mobility since the ‘70s and in that time I have had the pleasure of seeing the industry evolve enormously through technology and adoption of progressive policies. Yet the primacy of everything we do—both then and now—has always been our people. As much as the industry has transformed, my deepest motivation has always come from a belief in fairness and opportunity. Ever since I was told girls weren’t allowed on my little league baseball team, I have pushed against barriers that limit people’s inclusion, potential, and connection. I began my career in



the public sector with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation, and even in one of the most diverse cities in the world, looking around the office in those early days, it was clear that we needed a greater diversity of perspectives. Long before “DEI” became a buzzword and now a political flashpoint, I made it my mission to open doors for those facing a variety of barriers—not because it was mandated or politically correct, but because it was the right thing to do.

Although society has progressed over the years, it is still our responsibility—as leaders or individual contributors—to put our people first. ALL people! From those early days, I intentionally made it a priority to use whatever modicum of influence I had to help people achieve their goals, regardless of who they were or where they came from. As I advanced in my career and simultaneously participated with my amazing wife in the raising of three daughters, I continued to work to break down hurdles for those who have historically been underrepresented in our industry—and in society-at-large. For me, this journey came full circle when I was elected as the first man to serve on the board of WTS International—“advancing women and advancing transportation” and helping shape an industry that now better reflects the full range of its talent.



Mike Schneider celebrated with his daughters Miriam (left), Hava (Center), and wife Sharon Greene when he received the Lifetime Achievement Award for global work on public-private partnerships (2021).

Q: The industry has been transformed by policy and technology significantly over the years—how has that shaped your work?

The ways we interact with each other and the ways that we advance projects and improve societal infrastructure has changed, especially in terms of technology. I recall procuring the first Apple II computer for Parsons Brinckerhoff (the firm I served for over 30 years) in the 1980s, and by the early '90s I was among the first to carry around both laptop and cell phone. Those early steps into digital integration and connectivity, even in small ways, helped us advance toward greater efficiency and



innovation on a large scale with digital design tools, improved and ubiquitous collaboration systems, and numerous other technological innovations.

After starting my career in Southern California in the public sector, I joined Parsons Brinckerhoff (now WSP), and I stayed in Orange County as a base as the firm grew from about 300 individuals (primarily in New York) to about 12,000 by the time I moved on. I like to think I played a part in pushing the industry toward embracing change and exploring new ways of doing our work—always keeping an eye out for fresh perspectives alongside innovative technology. But in the end, while innovation drives us forward, it's the people who make the difference, do the work, and bring projects to life.



Mike Schneider joined Lori Kahikina, Chief Executive Officer of Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART), at the Grand Opening of the first segment of the Honolulu Rail Transit System, a \$10+ billion program he directed (2023).

Q: Your career has taken you all over the world. What did you learn from those experiences?

My experiences overseas have highlighted the differences in how projects are managed around the world and the importance of unique perspectives. I have had the opportunity to work in India, Mexico, Israel, and many other countries, and those experiences have been a constant reminder that we have great diversity in the way we work and in the way we relate to one another. In transportation, embracing a diversity of perspectives leads to better outcomes. By being open to different approaches, styles, and problem-solving methods, we broaden our horizons and discover new possibilities. We all can uplift one another and build systems that connect us all at the same time.



Q: Looking back over your decades in the industry, what do you consider your greatest accomplishment?

I take pride in the many projects I've helped bring to life, including massive public transport development programs around the world. What has stayed with me is the stories of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people I've had the privilege to work with over the last fifty years. I have watched eager high school students grow into confident leaders who now head major transportation agencies, state DOTs, and consulting and engineering firms. Playing even a small part in those journeys is the greatest accomplishment of my career. Along the way, I have come to believe our highest calling isn't just to deliver projects—it's to identify, hire, and lift up extraordinary people.

Q: What advice would you give to future leaders in the industry?



A group of young people in Hanoi, Vietnam, who are interested in engineering and STEM studies, joined Mike Schneider on an iconic railroad bridge.

I encourage my fellow leaders to seek out those who think differently, who challenge norms, and who may be even better than you are! Build teams rich in talent and diverse in perspective, and leave your ego at the door. That is where true excellence lives—in the integration of opportunity, diversity, and human connection. For individuals, do the work that lights you up and optimizes lives and communities. Take chances. Learn relentlessly. Build relationships that matter. After an amazing career in our industry, I can tell you: connecting the world is never just about roads, rails, or ski lifts—it's about the people you bring along for the journey and the lives you transform along the way. That's the legacy worth living—and leaving for those that follow.