

TRANSPORTATION

So Long, Rita

City veteran Rita Robinson, Transportation GM and Club Board Member, leaves the City after 33 years of service.

Story by Club Staff; Photos by Zaki Mustafa, Transportation, and Club Staff;
Special thanks to Jasmin San Luis, Transportation

The City came together twice in a major way to say goodbye to City veteran Rita Robinson, the former General Manager of Transportation, Sanitation and Housing (interim). She was also a longtime Club Board Member.

A major goodbye party was held for her Nov. 3 at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion downtown. She was also honored during a City Council meeting.



Rita left the City after 33 years to take a position with Los Angeles County.

"The Club is grateful for Rita's leadership in keeping the Los Angeles City Employees Association strong, stable and responsive to the needs of City Employees," said John Hawkins, Club CEO, on Rita's service to the Club. "We thank her and of course wish her the best."

Rita's Career

Rita L. Robinson was appointed General Manager, Transportation, in September 2007. She brought more than 30 years of government expertise to help find solutions to the traffic challenges that face the nation's second-largest city.

Ms. Robinson was responsible for the day-to-day operations of nearly 2,000 Transportation employees, whose mission is to provide for the safe and optimal mobility of people and goods throughout the City of Los Angeles to support economic activity and desirable quality of life. With the talented Transportation team, other transportation agencies and civic/community/business partnerships, she lead the Department's innovative vision forward.

While her main focus at Transportation was to support initiatives in congestion relief, short and long-range local/regional transportation planning and acquisition of funding to implement those



projects, it was the positive working relationships she forged with City partners including the Planning and Public Works departments, LAPD and DWP. The new City of Los Angeles Bicycle Plan, construction of Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) and Mobility Hubs were three good examples. Working with federal, California State and county agencies, developers and businesses, the Department is providing alternative mitigation options and pilot programs such as "Express Park," a high tech, congestion relief parking initiative slated for July 2011 funded by a \$15 million federal grant. Improvements accomplished under Ms. Robinson's leadership include a \$150 million expansion and upgrade of the Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control system (ATSAC) scheduled for December 2010 completion and a City-wide LED signal light installation program scheduled for completion in June 2011.

As the largest municipality with four million citizens in a county of 20 million, Ms. Robinson's appointment to serve on Metro's Board of Directors provided linkage for future transportation challenges facing Los Angeles. Measure "R" projects such as the Expo Line, Crenshaw Corridor, Regional Connector, East San Fernando Valley North/South Rapidway and a "Subway to the Sea" are all potential 30/10 initiatives that will create jobs and require Transportation coordination and teamwork. Likewise, projects such as highway upgrades, bridge and tunnel projects with CALTRANS had Ms. Robinson's staff working side by side with California State engineers and planners.

Before her appointment to Transportation, Rita directed Public Works/Sanitation, which has 3,000 employees and the mission of protecting public health and the environment through legal,

efficient and effective collection, treatment, reuse and disposal of liquid and solid wastes.

As Director of Sanitation, Ms. Robinson managed a budget of \$260 million. The Bureau oversaw collection, recycling and disposal of approximately one million tons of refuse annually from about 750,000 residential customers. Additionally, the Bureau provided services to comply with regulatory mandates in the collection, conveyance and treatment of storm water. Lastly, they complied with regulatory mandates in the collection, transport, treatment, reuse and disposal of an estimated 450 million gallons per day of wastewater from four million Los Angeles residents and 30 contract agencies.

Prior to becoming Sanitation's Director in January 2004, Ms. Robinson served as interim General Manager, Housing, for one year and as interim General Manager, Transportation, for six months.

As Interim General Manager of Housing, Ms. Robinson directed a staff of approximately 500 employees responsible for housing production, rehabilitation and preservation. Ms. Robinson's major accomplishments as Interim General Manager included the development of the implementation plan for the use of the \$100 million Affordable Housing Trust Fund approved by the Mayor and City Council for additional housing opportunities within the City.

While serving as Interim General Manager, Transportation, Ms. Robinson directed a staff of 1,500 full-time and 500 part-time professional, engineering, field and clerical employees responsible for the development of programs and implementation of solutions to meet the ground transportation needs of the traveling public, as well as everyday commerce.

Ms. Robinson, a longtime resident of

Certificate of Appreciation

Here's a Certificate of Transportation prepared for Rita Robinson and signed by George Moss, President, Board of Transportation Commission, and Bruce Iwasaki, President, Board of Taxicab Commission.

On the occasion of your retirement after 33 years of dedicated and excellent service to the City of Los Angeles, we would like to present you with a Certificate of Appreciation as a symbol of our gratitude for your unparalleled work and commitment.

"You received a bachelor of arts degree in American history and literature from Scripps College in Claremont, California.

"You started your career with the City of Los Angeles Community Development Department in April 1976 as a Management Assistant. You held various administrative positions within the Community Development Department. You were promoted to Sr. Management Analyst and Chief Management Analyst within various City Departments, including the Office of the City Administrative Officer, Housing Department, and Recreation and Parks Department and successfully managed several divisions within these Departments.

"You held positions as Interim General Manager in the Department of Transportation and the Housing Department and subsequently became the General Manager for the Bureau of Sanitation and the Department of Transportation.

"Your achievements range from assisting in the adoption of a refuse collection fee for the City of Los Angeles to playing an instrumental role in major transportation, traffic congestion relief and parking solution projects for the region, and serving as a Director on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board.

"You received letters of appreciation from business managers, a commendation for your outstanding contribution during a proposal review process, and a Council Resolution to recognize your commitment to the City and responsiveness to community concerns during controversial and difficult situations. You are widely respected and admired by the public, your peers, management, and elected officials for your innovation, strategic vision and problem solving ability in providing leadership for the City government at all levels of operations, analyses, financial management and project delivery.

"With the approach you took in delivering for all of these Departments, you have inspired people from all walks of life and changed the way the world sees Los Angeles. On behalf of everyone in our City, thank you for your 33 years of service to the City of Los Angeles, and [we] wish you the best in your next endeavor with good health, prosperity and happiness."



A History of Service to the City

Southern California and a 1975 graduate of Scripps College in Claremont, is a 33-year City employee and has served in a number of capacities in Los Angeles City government, including the Office of the City Administrative Officer, Rec and Parks, and the CDD. She is also a UCLA School of Public Affairs Senior Fellow for the 2010-2011 academic year.

City Council Meeting

At a City Council meeting that took a time out to say goodbye to Rita, the following comments were made:

Councilman Bill Rosendahl: Rita "is widely respected among the public, her peers, management, and of course, the elected officials for her innovation, strategic vision and problem-solving ability. She provides incredible leadership for the City government at all levels. She's a straight shooter, and in politics, it's nice to have a straight shooter around who's not afraid to tell it like it is. She never feels compelled to over-promise, and she always delivers. Rita has been a dedicated leader who has helped her staff, and we as a Council navigate some of the most difficult times this City government has ever faced. For all of that and more, I want to express my sincere gratitude and wish [her] continued happiness and success in all [her] subsequent endeavors."

Councilman Greig Smith: "I sat here in the budget committee many times, and I said, 'I think we have two or three great managers from the City of LA,' and Rita was always at the top of that list. Rita is a tremendous manager. She's a role model for people that want to become general managers."

Councilwoman Jan Perry, Club Member: "Rita, it's been a joy to work with you. You've always been responsive in whatever position you've held, and you have been an expert in many fields, not just in Transportation. And I enjoyed

working with you. You've had a glorious career here in the City of Los Angeles, and I'm heartened by the fact that you're continuing your career in service."

Councilman Bernard Parks: Councilmembers might have "asked you the same question in 12 different ways, and you answered it the same way each time. And finally you looked up and said, 'I'm not going to lie. I'm just going to tell you what the truth is, and I'm going to say it over and over again.' And I think that's what a General Manager should do. So thank you very much."

Councilman José Huizar: "I value your input and all your knowledge you brought to that, and all the knowledge that you bring with you having served this City so well. The County's gain, our loss. But hopefully we'll get to still see you and call upon you to share with us your knowledge and insights. Thank you so much, Rita."

Councilwoman Janice Hahn, Club Member: "Your skills as a General Manager really were important because every department takes its inspiration and takes its orders from the top. And you as a woman were a terrific role model for other general managers, but [also] for a lot of women employees in the City of Los Angeles. [They looked at you] for inspiration."

Councilman Dennis Zine: "I think you've served every department that the City has, [as] Assistant General Manager, General Manager [and] worker. Always [with] that smile, and always that can-do attitude to always make it happen. I wish you well."

Rita's response: "I will always love this City. I have loved everybody that I've worked with ... Thank all of you who came today to be with me. I just couldn't be in a better place. And I will never love a family like yours. I will love the County, but I will always love my family here first. So thank you."

The Club thanks Rita for her great and lengthy service to the association and all City Employees. Congratulations, Rita, and sail forth!



A Farewell to Rita

A goodbye party was held for Rita Robinson Nov. 3 at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

