

*Hello. Welcome to the InfraTalk Podcast, brought to you by Infrastructure Ventures. Come listen in as we talk with policy experts on how we can advance the use of innovative technologies in the infrastructure and transportation industry. Why? Because we know we can do better. So, sit back or walk the dog, go for a run, or grab a cup of coffee and join us for this episode of the InfraTalk Podcast.*

## **Greg Nadeau**

Hello, I'm Greg Nadeau, publisher of InfraTalk America. Join me for a conversation with Dara Wheeler, chief of Research, Innovation, and System information at Caltrans, the largest state DOT program in the country and co-chair of the AASHTO Innovation Initiative. In this episode we discuss the innovation initiatives that Caltrans is undertaking to expedite digital project delivery, the importance of funding research, and how we can work together to mainstream transformational technologies. This is the InfraTalk America podcast.

First, welcome to InfraTalk America. We are very much excited about this conversation. Let's start by asking you to describe your role in the agency or the division you run and its mission for Caltrans.

## **Dara Wheeler**

Sure. Well, first of all, thank you for having me and for allowing me to have this conversation because I really am a big believer in your mission statement that every conversation or innovation begins with a conversation. So, I'm an advocate for innovation, not only at Caltrans, but nationally. But here at Caltrans, I manage the research and innovation and system information portfolio for the department.

So, that means that I work with all the programs across the department to determine what their research needs are, utilize the Federal Highways Administration's state funding and research funding to promote research projects, work with our academic communities to deliver those projects. Currently, we have 279 active projects valued at over \$140,000,000. We choose around 40 or 50 projects per year to solve the challenges that we foresee happening in the department. So, love research, love working with our academic community.

Innovation is a little different. Innovation is that extra step that we're trying to measure, engage in California. So, three years ago, the innovation program was transferred to my office with just a couple of resources and no funding. And we decided that it was bigger than just two bodies and we needed to pour more resources, more time, more energy to kind of stand up the innovation program.

So, we've built our program as the hub of innovation for the department. So, we're 20,000 plus employees, 5000 engineers, 5000 maintenance employees. And so, we're trying to get to work across the department and figure out all of those innovations, put them in a portfolio, and then obviously make sure that people are recognized for innovating and for implementing. And so, part of our job is to make sure that innovation is spread across the department.

One little area is doing it. It's applicable to others. We want to share that. So, we're marketers of innovation and the system information side, that's GIS that's the HPMS, that's the system data that is required to deliver our projects, all of that common infrastructure data. And we do a little bit of data

governance too. Trying to stand up a huge data governance effort for the department is a big feat as well.

**Greg Nadeau**

Particularly one of the largest programs, the largest program in the country, and perhaps one of the largest programs in the world. So, you basically face every conceivable variation of transportation infrastructure challenge that there is. So, a great laboratory for innovation, to say the least. That's certainly how I've looked at Caltrans, because virtually every configuration seems to be experimented with and executed in many ways.

**Dara Wheeler**

Yeah.

**Greg Nadeau**

I'm going to shift gears because your role, that was a great summary of your role here at Caltrans. You also serve on a number and historically have served on a number of national committees and efforts. Currently you serve as the co-chair of the AASHTO Innovation Initiative (All), which I have some history with.

It really is the group within the AASHTO committee structure that sort of occupies the formal partnership with Federal Highway on the implementation of the Every Day Counts (EDC) Initiative, which is near and dear to my heart. That initiative, Every Day Counts (EDC), has now transcended three administrations over 12 years, largely because states really embraced it.

There's a State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC) in every state now and it's voluntary. States get to assess the various offerings and determine what works for them. So, a lot of that was the foundation for why it's still successful and the partnership with AASHTO.

And so, All has sort of evolved and taken on its own sort of policy initiatives. But I'd like to give – we have one of the co-chairs here with us. So, tell me what's All doing, initiatives that you're particularly excited about, or that All has taken on recently? Just share your insights on All with our audience.

**Dara Wheeler**

Thank you for bringing that one up. So, yeah, I'm super interested in the transportation innovation ecosystem, so much so that I mapped it out recently. I'm like, how do we all play together? How do all of these committees and programs work together? So AASHTO being kind of at the center of all of this, and we're all looking to promote – implement innovations.

That is our goal. We are all trying to spread good innovations and learn from each other. So, the AASHTO Innovation initiative (All), I'm lucky that I get to work next to Shantee Hastings, the chief engineer and deputy secretary at Delaware DOT. She's an amazing person to work with. We are trying to basically advance technology innovations through the Technical Service Program, through AASHTO, by funding four or five innovations on an annual basis.

And that means that we get to provide fact sheets and webinars and videos and peer exchanges, anything to learn more about the initiative and promote it with other DOTs. So, we've been doing that at All since, I think, 2007 I went back and looked. I think there's around 70 or 80 technology innovations that we funded. And it goes back to – there's some early BIM innovations. There are some early warm asphalt innovations. We are working with California on an ADA for curbs, I forget the name of that project, in a hydrogen-powered public safety Power Shut off initiative. There's a bunch.

I can't say that I can pick a favorite, but I think that All is providing its role to DOTs by getting more innovations out there, and the role that they play in the ecosystem is super important too. Reporting up to Special Committee on Research and Innovation for AASHTO, where we're having these conversations about innovation. There's also the connection with the Innovation Community of Practice that's called the ICOP. So, you've got the AASHTO Innovation Initiative and you've got the ICOP, and those two work well together. So, if I can tell you a little bit about the Innovation Community of Practice?

**Greg Nadeau**

I'd love to.

**Dara Wheeler**

Okay, great. That is an organization that initially was recommended by the Research and Innovation Subcommittee to have a conversation with innovation thought leaders about just innovation in general. So, we've got 42 of the 52 states signed up. We meet every other month. Todd May from Indiana DOT, is my co-chair in this effort, and we talk about best practices.

We share examples of innovations that have been implemented either through Build a Better Mousetrap or ones that were not successfully selected as part of the AASHTO Innovation Initiative annual call for projects. We also talk about Federal Highway's, Every Day Counts, some of the other programs that they fund. We talk about the culture of innovation. We talk about performance measures, metrics for innovation. We talk about how states are having innovation fairs and how we can learn from each other. So, it's just growing, this network.

And I would say we've built a lot of momentum in this community and I think that there's a lot of connections that have benefited from this knowledge that we're sharing. And I really do see the technology innovations being advanced through this discussion as well, not just in All but through ICOP.

**Greg Nadeau**

How important is collaboration with the private sector in your experience working in these leadership roles?

**Dara Wheeler**

It's huge. It's huge. The answers are out there, and we just need to change our internal cultures at state DOTs in some cases to be able to adopt and use these innovations. But yeah, I think for the AASHTO Innovation Initiative in particular, we're evolving. Times have changed since we were initially created back in 2007. So, I see huge opportunities to bring in the community, the consultant community, the vendor community, the public private partnerships to talk more about these solutions that are out there, and then not only have that discussion within AII, but bring it to ICOP too, and see if we can have these solutions brought into resolving some of the challenges that we're facing.

**Greg Nadeau**

One of the most difficult things to do is –InfraTalk America, our interest is growing a following of policymakers, policy influencers, people who are in the business of advancing resources or policies associated with infrastructure. Legislators, governor's offices, other agency policymakers. I've spent a good chunk of my career working within the Federal Aid Highway Program, which is a very distinct federal program designed to deliver highway and bridge infrastructure that was created in the late 50s. And essentially the program has changed remarkably but effectively hasn't.

The Federal-State Partnership that is so central to successful deployment of this program ought to be emulated by other federal agencies, but it would be different. I mean, the unique relationship between the state DOT and the Federal Aid Highway Program is very unique within, certainly in the infrastructure field. And the current administration just announced they want to expand Every Day Counts to other modes. And I know FTA is taking a real aggressive look at how to do that. They've got hundreds of grant recipients that spend tons of money that can be done more efficiently using the same using advanced practices and digital project delivery and other applications.

So, the sort of multimodal nature of looking at this on a broader basis makes sense. And AASHTO has a broad multimodal commitment. So, the question is AII looking at the broad multimodal opportunities and innovative approaches to whether it's project delivery or other aspects of the program?

**Dara Wheeler**

I think we are, but I think we can look a little bit more broadly than that. I think that we would have to bring in that conversation that more of an influence into the annual selection of projects, have that dialogue with our membership. But yeah, we're doing it a little bit, but I think there's an opportunity to expand, and I love that idea to expand.

**Greg Nadeau**

Great. You mentioned your colleague, Deputy Secretary of Delaware Shantee Hastings, and we had an opportunity to interview her as well. So, now we've completed our goal of interviewing both co-chairs and we had talked about, in terms of the federal role, workforce development is a challenge across the board. Whether it's state DOTs, local public infrastructure agencies, it's clearly the private sector, contractors, engineering firms. It's a growing challenge.

We're not producing enough engineers, civil engineers especially, to replace the ones that are retiring. So, this is putting a lot of strain on a lot of state DOTs and the need to attract sort of the next generation of talent who really understand technology, who frankly wouldn't understand how to function without technology...

### **Dara Wheeler**

Yeah

### **Greg Nadeau**

...which was an observation a couple of the folks we interviewed made. So, at the federal level, you've got these high level, broader challenges, but you come back to the state of California and Caltrans. Now you're starting to focus more specifically on homegrown issues and challenges that you face on a day-to-day basis. So maybe shift back to Caltrans in California and talk a little bit about some of the exciting things that are going on here and, of course, weave in any more federal policy objectives that you think make sense in the context of the conversation.

But we had talked about a couple of specific programs, but under the sort of general category of digital transformation, we're looking into a lot of the great work that Caltrans is doing, in my judgment, some real national impact kind of stuff. But on the higher-level sort of role you play, can you talk about a couple of examples of how Caltrans is leading in the application of technology to whatever objectives that you want to select?

### **Dara Wheeler**

I can try to talk about the projects to the level that they rise, but there's two projects in particular that rise to the occasion to share. The first is called the California Integrated Travel Project. And this is an effort that is led by Jeanie Ward-Waller, who's the planning deputy in the department, supported by the CEO, Tony Tavares, and led by the program manager, Jillian Gillette to transform the way that we pay for transit in California.

There's over 300 transit agencies in California. And as you know, whenever you go to procure a ticket on a train or a bus or rail, you have to buy a ticket. Or the cards from one program don't necessarily talk to the cards of the other program. So, they're trying to standardize, and we're trying to standardize the way that you purchase your transit ticket.

And the perfect example is purchasing a cup of coffee. When you want to get a cup of coffee, you go in and you give cash, you use credit card, your watch, your smartphone. In order to purchase a transit or rail ticket, you have to go in and put some money on a card or buy a ticket, and then you go and use that ticket to purchase something.

So, we're trying to make it more seamless so that it's more efficient across transit agencies. And like I said, there's 300 in California. So, purchasing a ticket should be more seamless, should be more efficient, should be easier. We're also trying to require the 300 transit agencies to use the same data. It's called GTFS data, and so that we can provide that data to consumers so that they can travel more efficiently.

So, when they get off one system to get on another, it's not having to go to another web page to get the information. The data is all run off the same feed, and it's more seamless. And so, this is a monumental innovation. It's supported by our California State Transportation Agency Secretary Toks Omishakin, the Innovation Mobility Deputy Lori Pepper and the Rail and Transit Deputy Chad Edison. When this innovation is successful and finished, hopefully within a couple of years, don't quote me on the time frame. It will be something hopefully that other states can emulate as well.

**Greg Nadeau**

That's massive.

**Dara Wheeler**

It's huge.

**Greg Nadeau**

I mean, the coordination and you have multiple agencies and authorities who have their own independent authority and I mean, bringing together the framework of all that is just a herculean task.

**Greg Nadeau**

Yeah. So that's one project. The second project I think you know a little bit about. It's called CALMS. And that stands for Caltrans Asset Lifecycle Management System. And it's basically expediting project delivery through standardization of data in a geospatial sense and making it 3D. So, Aaron Chamberlain and Mark Countz, who I think that you know...

**Greg Nadeau**

I do.

**Dara Wheeler**

...are the leaders behind this effort, probably working with their Chief Engineer, Donna Berry. And this is another game changer of a project for Caltrans. Once we're able to digitize all of the delivery data that is needed, it's going to make our process more efficient and be able to deliver faster, probably cheaper.

**Greg Nadeau**

No question. No question. It's another Herculean effort, which we are working with the frontline leaders that you talked about, part of what we want to do is have these conversations with frontline champions who are really the experts and the advocates and laboring on those front lines. But they're doing so.

And I know in the case of those two gentlemen, with enthusiastic support of their division chiefs and leadership of the department. The secret source to innovation, in my judgment, is exactly that. I call it basically top down, bottom up. You've got to have the leadership expressing their support in the form of backing you up if things don't go exactly the way they should. The sort of risk factor innovation, risk aversion is a big problem with advancing new technology and new innovation.

So, you've got to provide that kind of moral support and real support and resources are critical. If they get that kind of commitment, they can move mountains. And I think this is a good case of where that's going on, both these efforts you described.

In an organization the size of Caltrans, you're one of several in the country that are decentralized, and you've got multiple districts who all deliver projects, and all operate in some ways autonomously to be effective. But there are overlays of policies I'm sure headquarters tries to execute across the system, particularly in your case and your team research and innovation. Is there a secret sauce to deploying innovation and tech transfer in the context of influencing or encouraging district level adoption or acceptance of these innovations?

**Dara Wheeler**

I think we're all still working on the secret sauce, but I can tell you a little bit about how we govern innovation. But first, before I forget, you mentioned earlier how you can be a policy influencer, and that automatically made me think of being a social media influencer. And I'm thinking, man, I want to be a policy influencer. I know that I'm out there having conversations on a national level about innovation, and I think that's a little bit about pushing policy...

**Greg Nadeau**

Sure.

**Dara Wheeler**

...and connecting people. So just wanted to address the policy influencer. I had never heard that.

**Greg Nadeau**

Yeah. Policy influencers to me are people who have the necessary subject expertise to be considered highly credible and organizing conversations that help educate. I mean, having spent literally my entire life in policy work, I'm not a lawyer, I'm not an engineer. I don't have those technical skills.

I have the ability to assess a problem, identify a solution, but only with the help of an array of experts. And in our business, I'll still call it our business, a lot of complex challenges. So, the first step to successful innovation in an organization like a state DOT are the frontline troops that bring that collection of expertise to the table.

The next necessary step is for the leadership and management of these organizations to be smart enough to tap into that and make it easy for them to innovate and provide them with the tools they need to make it happen. And what you're describing is exactly that. So, it's exciting stuff. And the digital transformation that's occurring at a fairly rapid pace compared to historical norms and other sort of innovation efforts is really becoming, I think, remarkable.

But the kind of work that the team here at Caltrans is doing in this space has an impact on and provides real insight and opportunities for other states to emulate. So, it's very important work on both the state and national scale. So, congratulations on that. I want to sort of shift back to you. You explained what you do and what your division does.

I'd like to explore a little bit what got you here. You are remarkably a veteran of 33 years here at Caltrans and you've served in a number of very important roles. How did it start? What got you into this business?

**Dara Wheeler**

That's a good question. So, if I can go back to the beginning. I graduated with a degree from political Science in San Diego State many years ago. So, I was always interested in the politics. I thought out of college I wanted to be a lobbyist or an advocate or something like that. And I started working for a couple of governors, enjoyed that time, kind of in the elected circle, managing projects that were high profile in California. I worked for Governor Pete Wilson and got to do some efforts on planning, worked for the Office of Planning and Research and I also did some military based reuse retention commission stuff.

Started off the career in politics. I thought I was going to be in politics, like I said, going to lobbying or something. But at the end of the first administration, I took a brief step outside of that and worked for a legislative commission on local governance for the 21st century, looking at local land use laws. And then that kind of got me over to Caltrans.



**Greg Nadeau**

Sure.

**Dara Wheeler**

So, I stepped into Caltrans still kind of thinking that I was going to go into politics a little bit more. Went to work for the Division of Transportation Planning for ten years, and then when I was coming out of that, had family, kids were growing, I was able to do a little bit more. I stepped into a chief of staff role, and I got back into what I really loved to do, which was that policy, working with electives and looking across an organization.

So, I got into that, and then after four years, I thought it's a good amount of time to try something new. I stepped into rail and mass transit for a year, and then my dream job came available, and I transitioned to research and innovation. And then I really fell in love with innovation.

I thought I was going to be data focused when I first stepped into the role. Matter of fact, I had a boss that asked me, what do you want to focus on? And I was like, I think I want to do the data thing. I think I really want to promote the data governance and be on top of the digital conversation and transformation.

I just stepped into innovation. I don't even know how it happened other than I joined a couple of national committees and started networking. And like I said earlier, innovation begins with a conversation. I enjoyed having those conversations and just grew to managing some national conversations on innovation. And then beyond the two committees that you talked about or we shared earlier, the AASHTO Innovation Initiative and the Community of Practice.

Working with the National Academies and the Transportation Research Board has been amazing in the number of opportunities that they've given me to be on some project panels, trying to come up with some solutions to capture innovation on a national scale. And by that time, I was hooked. It was the people that were in the same space and the friends that I was making across the other networks.

And then to bring all of that back and say, here's how another state does it. And then we're talking to other states about some of the digital transformational projects that we're working on and sharing with them, and then we're all talking about efficiencies and we're sharing best practices. And it was just I was out of the gate and just running with innovation.

So, trying to capture innovation in a department this size is hard. I don't think that I've told you yet that we've got a governance process for innovation here. It's a subset of the executive board called the Innovation Leadership Council, and that group is made up of district directors and executives, and they advise on the direction that we're taking in the innovation space. And so, we have lots of good conversations. We talk about implementation. We talk about risk.

**Greg Nadeau**

It's so smart, I mean smart for the senior leadership to really commit to having an ongoing conversation about, okay, what isn't happening, what should happen, what happened? It didn't go so well at that level. As long as that top down, bottom up element exists, and based on what I'm seeing through observation and some of the work we're doing on some of these other projects, you can see that happening, that those champions on the front lines – they're sanctioned that they can go out and push that envelope and they can take challenges associated with these efforts to the leadership. So important. That's exciting news, I think, for Caltrans.

So, one of the series that we've established at InfraTalk America is Women Leading innovation and Transportation Infrastructure, which was a consequence of our having conducted, and I think I conducted all of these to date, and it was really focused on eliciting certain information from certain officials about– we're doing a documentary on e-Ticketing.

We've done two to sort of explain to policymakers this very discrete element no one has ever heard of that's part of the supply chain delivery system. It's essential. It's getting the asphalt from the plant to the work site and it's finding out and having a record of what was in that truck, what kind of mix, where did it go on the face of the earth for your whole asset management lifecycle elements. And 43 states adopted the initiative in EDC 6.

And we're now working, as an industry, to keep that momentum going. But it's remarkable as something so simple, essentially transitioning from paper tickets that essentially ended up being destroyed, and all the data on that ticket was destroyed. Whatever was kept was manually entered and mistakes get made. And it's just a great example from my standpoint.

The developers that develop the software and implement the software and troubleshoot and all that stuff, it's probably not so easy on them, but it's working. And a number of states have adopted it or are in the process of adopting aggressive implementation. So, it's a good example of that. I like to use for particularly people in the policy world who don't understand the technical elements of what it takes to deliver a project. Something so simple, so well executed, can make such a difference.

And that story is going to be told time and time again through the various elements of digital project delivery. The so-called open BIM and BIM for infrastructure terms no one else understands, but those of us inside who are trying to make some sense of it all. But the work you do, the work your team does. Try to, as we close this conversation, explain to the average policymaker at the municipal level, county, state people in staff in the state legislature how important the research and development mission is for every state DOT in the country, but obviously, particularly the impact it will have in California in the long term.

## **Dara Wheeler**

Yeah. So, research is critical in the innovation space in that if we don't identify a problem and investigate it and prove that it's something that's going to be a solution, it's typically not ready to be implemented. So, research is a critical foundation of innovation, but it's not always resulting in an innovation. So, we're one of the largest consumers of research for a state DOT. We've got great academic partners in California that we work with to solve our transportation challenges.

We like to think that everything that we do from a research perspective is in line with the strategic vision of the department and with the federal government as well. The innovation priorities. We try to be selective in the type of research that we fund so that it does help in that space. Now, not everything is technology, but there's a huge need also to carve out some funds or to figure out how technology supports the challenges that we're facing. And that's a whole other story of trying to procure new technology and to test new technology. But research is definitely a way that we can get further advanced in that area.

### **Greg Nadeau**

To sort of— I want to tap into the role you play now as soon to be a member of the Women in Leadership Transportation Infrastructure series, especially the length of your career. My wife constantly reminds me that women are effective because they became, by necessity, expert multitaskers. And I think there's a lot of truth to that. But your career as a woman working your way up in this massive organization.

The reason we created the series was actually as a result of some of the feedback I got from some of our guests, which was, is this something that should be noted? And they said, absolutely, because there are girls and young women are the absolute necessity for us to recruit more women, more minorities to these technical positions, especially engineering planning technicians, whatever the case may be.

So, take this opportunity to talk to the young women and girls of America who are looking for career opportunities. And I think you've already touched on how rewarding this has been for you. But we need more girls and women to pursue STEM study, end up in the infrastructure world and what do we need to do to make that exciting for them as a prospect?

### **Dara Wheeler**

Sure. Well, I think it all starts with getting into the schools and having these conversations and showing that transportation is not just about, say, a person on the side of the road or an orange truck. It's about so much more and the building component and the STEM component. And that girls should be empowered to do anything that they can do and not limited to a field just because they're a girl.

So, I think that we do number of if you want to talk about segwaying into how do we recruit and retain the best and the brightest. I mean, this is a great opportunity to say in California we work with elementary schools through the Garrett Morgan Competition, partnering with the Manetta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University to talk to classrooms, I think they're fifth grade classrooms, about the career in transportation.

And they do projects, and it's a competition, and we go into the classroom and we give them prizes. And that's a great program, but that is talking to all students. But at that entry level, we're also getting into the track and rides program through AASHTO...

### **Greg Nadeau**

Great program.

**Dara Wheeler**

Great program. The STEM education. Again, we're talking across all students, but I wish I had the data of women coming into transportation. And if there needs to be a push, I would love to innovate in that space of how do we recruit more women if that's what the data shows that we need to do. But beyond that, we have to be in California, a competitor in the workforce. So, we've got a number of tools that we utilize to be the employer of choice.

Coming out of the pandemic, we were all forced to do some of the telework. I think that's what the new generation is a little bit more used to doing with online and virtual meetings and just the adaptability of technology. So that is a tool in our toolbox now to allow some of the teleworks to continue. We have to be competitive in our salaries. So, we're working to make sure that we're just not hiring the new engineers and the new data scientists and all of those classifications and training it up and leaving. We need to make sure that it's worth their time.

**Greg Nadeau**

Competing with the private sector. Government agencies don't do very well on the salary front.

**Dara Wheeler**

Absolutely.

**Greg Nadeau**

And that's got to change in the technology side.

**Dara Wheeler**

We're doing a bunch of virtual hiring fairs. So, the last one, I think, in the planning program, we had 380 engineers apply. We screened those engineers and determined that 180 or 200 we could bring in for interviews. And we interviewed them and then went out to our partners across the department and said, this subset of candidates has already been screened, ready to make offers. And so, we're trying to make it easier to bring on new staff.

We're also working, I'm super excited, with AASHTO and the National Academies and TRB to utilize their recruitment platforms. So, working with AASHTO to advertise vacancies. And we're going to have a presence at the annual Transportation Research Board...

**Greg Nadeau**

Great.

**Dara Wheeler**

...meeting in January with a booth so that when the 6000 or 8000 or 10,000 attendees of that annual meeting are there, we can have a presence and talk to all these students and talk to all of these partners and become a little bit more of a visible employer of choice. But to circle back to particularly having a conversation with young women about what's exciting in new and transportation, yeah, I think that needs to be done a little bit more. We could all benefit from that.

**Greg Nadeau**

Yeah. This has been a challenge of state DOTs back in my days in the 2000s with MaineDOT. I remember the conversations back then. It was anticipated, but we've got to pick up the pace, no question about it. Well, thank you for that. This was a wonderful conversation. Our hope is that it continues to be part of the dialogue that opens people up. And again, the goal of really engaging policymakers and understanding the work that's going on in state DOTs and other local and regional agencies, it's extraordinary.

And the more, I think the awareness of the good work that's going on, that's why we really need to do all we can. And AASHTO does a good job with this, and obviously states do as well. Celebrate the successes, celebrate the champions on the front lines. Make sure they understand not only do we have their back when they're pushing the outside of the envelope, but that we're going to celebrate the success when it happens and support them when things don't go well. And that's how you're going to innovate, that's how you're going to move the ball forward.

**Dara Wheeler**

And have those conversations.

**Greg Nadeau**

And offices like yours and leaders like you are essential to make that happen. So, thank you for the work you do, both at the state and federal level. And thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

**Dara Wheeler**

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about innovation. I'm very passionate about it.

**Greg Nadeau**

That's obvious.

**Dara Wheeler**

And matter fact, I have a pin here that I brought from my office.

**Greg Nadeau**

Oh, goodness.

**Dara Wheeler**

Innovation and transportation.

**Greg Nadeau**

I love it.

**Dara Wheeler**

So, I don't know if you have one, but...

**Greg Nadeau**

I don't.

**Dara Wheeler**

Now you have a Caltrans innovation and transportation pin.

**Greg Nadeau**

I love it. Thank you so much.

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