

## PM 2: Mega Projects in Southern California for Commuters and Commerce

*Magic Kingdom 2*

### MODERATOR



**Maria S. Salinas**

*President & CEO, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce and Board Member, Mobility 21*

Maria S. Salinas is the President and CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, the largest business association in Los Angeles County representing member companies and serving the interests of more than 235,000 businesses across the Los Angeles region. Maria took the helm of the organization in August of 2018 and became the first woman and Latina to lead the Chamber in its 136-year history. An accomplished businesswoman, entrepreneur, and a determined community leader, Maria's business acumen and financial expertise provide her with the right experience to lead the L.A. Area Chamber.

Maria, a steward of the Chamber's new vision, "A Thriving Region for All," has re-imagined the role of the Chamber. The Chamber looks to the future with a vision to build an inclusive economy and lead in three pillar areas of focus: advocacy work, global engagement, and through community collaboration for economic growth and mobility. The Los Angeles region, which is the 14th largest economy in the world, and the Chamber membership represents a broad spectrum of industries, small businesses, corporations, academic institutions, and nonprofits, which are all examples that the Los Angeles economy is diverse, dynamic and that business is a force for good.

Maria was an appointee to Governor Gavin Newsom's Commission on the Future of Work and named to his Business and Jobs Recovery Task Force during the COVID-19 pandemic. She was appointed to the US Chamber of Commerce's Committee of 100, a distinction reserved for the top 100 Chambers across the country. She represents the Los Angeles business community in state-wide policy initiatives with the Coalition of Regional Economic Association Leaders (R.E.A.L.), she is a member of the Board of Directors of Mobility 21, a regional transportation effort, and an appointee of Mayor Karen Bass to the Small Business Cabinet. She serves on the Board of Directors of The Music Center and Pacific Council for International Policy, among others.

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### PANELISTS



**Michael Christensen**

*Chief Development Officer, Los Angeles World Airports*

Michael Christensen was appointed as Interim Chief Development Officer in March 2024. Prior to his appointment, Michael served as the Deputy Executive Director Operations and Maintenance at Los Angeles World Airports, in August 2019. His responsibilities include overseeing both facilities maintenance and utilities along with operations and emergency management. Michael has over 43 years of experience as a transportation professional. Prior to joining the Department, Michael held senior executive positions at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Before joining the Port of Los Angeles in 2006, Michael served as Vice President at Parsons Transportation Group, where he was responsible for a broad range of local, regional, and national airport, port, planning, goods movement, and rail projects. Before his Parsons assignments, he served as Vice President and Managing Principal for Nolte and Associates and as President of Summit/Lynch Consulting Engineers, both transportation consulting firms in the San Francisco Bay Area.

His career also included 16 years of service to the Southern Pacific Railroad where he held posts at eight different locations throughout the railroad's 13-state system engaged in maintenance, construction, operations, and environmental remediation. Michael earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Arizona State University and a certificate in Executive Education from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He is a professional civil engineer in California and nine other western states and is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers. He is a Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives. Michael has served on a number of governmental, industry and technical advisory boards and is currently a member of the Redondo Beach Unified School District Board of education.

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**Sean A. Gamette**

*Managing Director of Engineering Bureau, Port of Long Beach*

Sean Andrew Gamette, P.E., is Managing Director of Engineering for the Port of Long Beach, California, named to the post in February 2017. He oversees the six divisions that make up the Engineering Bureau for the nation's second-busiest seaport.

Mr. Gamette joined the Port in 2003 as Senior Program Manager and was promoted to Deputy Chief Harbor Engineer in 2009. In September 2014, he advanced to Senior Director of the Program Delivery Group and Chief Harbor Engineer.

The six divisions of the Engineering Bureau are organized into two different groups: Program Delivery and Engineering Design & Maintenance.

The Engineering Bureau is responsible for the most extensive capital program in the Port of Long Beach's history. Projects include the state-of-the-art Middle Harbor container terminal and the replacement of the Gerald Desmond Bridge. In addition, the Bureau is responsible for the delivery of design projects, technical reports, studies, plans and specifications, and is also responsible for upkeep of Port-owned infrastructure.

Mr. Gamette is a California Registered Professional Civil Engineer and holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

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**Darrell E. Johnson**

*Chief Executive Officer, Orange County Transportation Authority and Board Member, Mobility 21*

Darrell E. Johnson is the Chief Executive Officer of the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), a dynamic agency of 1,400 dedicated professionals. With a focus on enhancing mobility and sustainability for more than 3 million county residents, Darrell leads a comprehensive portfolio of multimodal projects, initiatives and services.

Guided by OCTA's 17-member Board of Directors, Darrell oversees an annual budget exceeding \$1.7 billion. His role encompasses strategic oversight of the planning, financing, and implementation of Orange County's freeway, street, and rail development, in addition to managing countywide transit and commuter-rail services, paratransit service, express lanes, active transportation, and environmental programs.

Since his appointment as CEO in 2013, Darrell has championed innovative financing methods to optimize the impact of Measure M, a voter-approved half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements. He has led a drive toward a more sustainable and equitable transportation network, marked by pioneering environmental mitigation and water-quality initiatives, and a trailblazing shift toward a zero-emission bus fleet.

OCTA is currently managing approximately \$1.8 billion in infrastructure improvements, including the OC Streetcar, a state-of-the-art electric streetcar, with an additional \$1.4 billion in projects anticipated to start within the next two years.

Darrell continues to reshape Orange County's transit system. With a focus on efficiency, passenger experience, and alignment with market demands, he has ushered in reforms including a redesigned bus system, free fares for youth and community college students, and the advancement of community-based and special-event transit services. Embracing innovation and improved connectivity, OCTA explores dynamic technology solutions and strategic private-sector alliances.

On a broader scale, Darrell represents OCTA on matters of local, state, and national policy pertaining to successful transportation program planning, financing, and delivery. He sits on the boards of the Self-Help Counties Coalition, Mobility 21, and Orange County Business Council.

Darrell lives in Rancho Santa Margarita and is married with two children.

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### **Stephanie N. Wiggins**

*Chief Executive Officer, LA Metro and Immediate Past Chair, Mobility 21*

Stephanie Wiggins is the CEO of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), the lead transportation planning, programming, financing, and construction agency for the 10 million residents of LA County and the second busiest transit agency in the United States. As CEO of Metro, Stephanie leads a public agency with 11,000 employees and an annual budget of \$9 billion. Stephanie also leads the nation's largest transportation capital improvement program, with \$26 billion worth of projects currently under construction. A lifelong trailblazer and champion of equity and inclusion, Stephanie is the first woman – and first African American woman – to lead Metro.

Over her three-decade career in transportation, Stephanie has led numerous initiatives that have driven innovation in the transportation industry and centered equity in the delivery of transit and transportation services. As CEO of Metro, Stephanie has led massive investments to improve the transit customer experience, including the creation of the nation's largest transit ambassador program and the implementation of the GoPass program, which provides free transit to K-12 and community college students. She has also overseen the delivery of two transit megaprojects, the \$2.3 billion K Line in south LA and the \$1.9 billion Regional Connector in downtown LA, and she has ensured Metro's transportation investments are as equitable as possible through the implementation of the Metro Equity Platform and Equity Zero-Based Budgeting (EZBB).

Before joining Metro as CEO in June 2021, Stephanie served as the CEO of Metrolink, the nation's third largest passenger rail system with 538 route-miles throughout Southern California. Prior to Metrolink, Stephanie was Deputy CEO of Metro, where she assisted the CEO in providing leadership, formulating, and achieving strategic public transportation objectives, including the passage of Measure M, a half-cent sales tax approved by 71 percent of voters in LA County. Earlier in her career, Stephanie led the creation of LA County's first high occupancy toll lanes, known as ExpressLanes and greatly expanded Metro's utilization of local, small, and historically underutilized businesses through new vendor procurement programming.

Stephanie is a graduate of Whittier College and holds a Master of Business Administration from the USC Marshall School of Business. She has been the recipient of numerous awards including the 2020 National League of Railway Women's Woman of the Year award. She is the founding president of the Inland Empire Chapter of Women's Transportation Seminar, a Board Member of the Los Angeles Chapter of Friends of the Children, the Southern California Chapter of the American Heart Association, the Southern California Leadership Council, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Whittier College Board of Trustees.