



Unedited Transcript – Mpact Podcast Episode 84

Wins and Co-benefits from Climate Work

With

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and

Dr. Cris Liban, Chief Sustainability Officer

at LA Metro

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[00:00:00] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** Welcome. My name is Julie Eaton Ernst. I'm HNTB's National Climate Resilience Practice Leader, and I'm thrilled to be here today with Cris Liban. HNTB is an Mpact Partner and Champion. We are excited today to talk to you about climate resilience, transit, sustainability, the intersection of all of the above.

[00:00:25] Cris, do you want to give a quick introduction, your bio and how you come to this world of sustainability, resilience, and transit?

Cris Liban: Yeah, sure. Thanks, Julia. Thanks for having me here to HNTB and to Mpact for inviting us to tell a little bit about our story here in the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

[00:00:46] We're the 2nd or 3rd largest agency and transportation agency in the whole country, depending on what metric you use. I'm the Chief Sustainability Officer here in the organization. As the chief sustainability officer, I have a responsibility for climate resiliency, sustainability actions. We have a strategic plan that has over 180 initiatives and efforts here in the organization.

[00:01:14] And, we're really proud of this program. We've been doing this since 2007. And, I'm hoping that we could touch a little bit about everything that we're doing, the great things that are happening here in Los Angeles that hopefully will resonate with many parts of your listeners: cities and counties.

[00:01:32] And hopefully we can be helpful, with that information.

[00:01:36] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** Thanks, Cris. Wow, 180 initiatives is incredible. That's definitely a lot. And something I want to ask more questions about because I think it's a, it was fun to see what those look like. So much of this world, when we were talking about climate,

resilience, sustainability, it feels so new. But 2007, you guys have been doing this for, 15 years now, right? Is that about right? 15

[00:02:05] **Cris Liban:** years, actually. 17 years this month.

[00:02:09] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** I've got the COVID brain. I just have lost time.

Cris Liban:No, don't worry about it.Two years is not too bad and not too far off,

[00:02:15] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** One of the things I'm curious to hear to start our conversation is, we hear climate. We hear resilience. We hear sustainability. There's a lot of language that comes into that, and people often have their own idea of what that means. And so I'd love to hear from you and your own words when we're talking about climate or resilience or sustainability. What does that mean to you personally? How do you identify with those words?

[00:02:42] **Cris Liban:** Yeah yeah, thanks for the question. I hail from the Philippines. I grew up there, in an emerging economy there in Asia, we have been taught by our parents to, everything that's on the plate, do not waste anything because everything is so expensive.

[00:02:59] You also live in, I also grew up in, in a country where we grew up in a dictatorship and that has really set up, our mindset towards, what freedom is and what that really means in terms of what we can do, the innovation, that one can aspire for and live with and Work through those challenges to become the best you can be.

[00:03:23] I moved here when I was in the late teenage years and, but went back to the Philippines and finished my college over there but, started working over here. It was a very interesting journey because I didn't really intend to, land in the environmental field when I graduated, I actually was looking for work in the oil fields, in the oil industry and in the mining industry.

[00:03:48] And there was something that, it was on top of my mind while I was studying with my geology degree, in the University of the Philippines. And the rationale for all of that was to make the Philippines the greatest country in the world economically, to discover The, most lucrative minefield to be part of the discovery of the deepest oil reserves that I can find, that was like the goal in life.

[00:04:16] But economics personal economics essentially, game came through and when I graduated, I remember a barrel of oil being something like 15, 17 per barrel. And there was really no job for a geologist and this was in 1989 when I graduated and I was looking at many ads on the paper.

[00:04:40] There's really no Internet to look at and to look into you have to write, your application letter to these different companies. And I think after, 150, 200 rejection letters, my dad came home one day and he said, I was reading something in the office and there

was this magazine and there's this company, that's looking for environmental specialists, and I'm like what is that? And I think it was history. The proverbial was history from there, I became a traditional environmental specialist, looking at how to remediate as with many other stories of people who are now in this field to clean up sites.

[00:05:21] So it was literally a 180 right from what we now know as, essentially strip mining or, removing, minerals from the earth and a lot of that pollution to now becoming, this person who actually would preserve and protect, the environment and it was not a well, while the job was different from what I thought it was not too far away from the values that he grew up with, of conserving of living with the earth, eating what you grow that kind of stuff.

[00:05:55] And, it was. An interesting journey by itself from that 1st day of being an environmental specialist to where I am right now. And the evolution of after. 10 years of being a consultant I didn't really want to. And nothing about private consulting, I didn't see the journey for me to retire as a private consultant.

[00:06:21] I thought it was more fulfilling, personally fulfilling to actually be in government and be an owner of assets and allow for me to work through, and making a difference that way. I, from a very successful consulting career I did Turn my back against that, and started out on the bottom of our organization here.

[00:06:45] I've been here for 21 years here in LA Metro, the longest I've been in, in any organization. And in all those 21 years, I started from, from the bottom here in the organization to where I am right now and between where I started to where I am right now there are I think around 10 different steps, 6 of those 6 or 7 of those steps did not exist.

[00:07:09] When I started here so it was not only a trailblazing journey, but also a way for, I think this organization, our industry and transportation and for us to be able to recognize the importance of having You know, a very robust, holistic worldview not only environmental compliance and protection and stewardship, but allowing for other factors, such as social justice such as economic common sense such as, including, the multiple facets of emerging issues relative to climate and how that impacts, our lives and our infrastructure a recognition of that has been, I think, reflective of how our organization here has created 7 positions beyond, what was a, an end point before when I started here creating 7 positions up to executive level, a recognition of all of that make a difference in the lives of, 10 Million people here in Los Angeles and I'll end by saying that, in the course of the last 17 years we have evolved as well in terms of our strategies.

[00:08:20] We started out with. Just looking at, how climate actually. Is affecting our situation here in the agency to looking at energy conservation and then also looking at other policy initiatives, very simple thought, trying to just figure out, what, climate change meant to us to now having this very robust consideration of environmental justice that's been the hallmark of this program from the get go. But now it's more visible, thanks to all the advocacy and the conversations happening around the country and then, allowing for the common sense approach to actually make us more successful having revenues generated

and for those revenues that we generate from our programs to be reinvested back, into the infrastructures that we build here.

[00:09:13] And then one final note in that one, we do not forget that, people are part of the conversation as well. There is nothing about the things that we do without. Thinking about the people that are affected and that's an integral part of the conversation here. And so the programs really stem from youth all the way out to the aging population and considering all of those. In the outcomes that we're aspiring for.

[00:09:47] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** Thanks, Cris. That's an incredible journey from, extracting from the environment to protecting and stewarding and thinking about how, at the end of the day, those roots of just the simplicity of being mindful, finishing what's on your plate community are still a hallmark of your career and your, Approach to this.

[00:10:10] And I think, one of the things that you mentioned, the, that common sense approach and having people be a part of it, I think, is something that many of us resonate with and thinking about. Okay. What are we, what do we really need to do here? What are we talking about with our climate crisis?

[00:10:26] And what does that mean in the sense of At the end of the day, transportation is inherently human. It's how we move. It's how we interact. It's how we get to our loved ones. And it's incredibly vulnerable when we're looking at these extreme weather events and climate change. And I think, for me, as I first approached resilience.

[00:10:46] Without knowing that was the word when I was at Tulane University, starting off as a freshman when Hurricane Katrina rolled in and the role of transportation and getting everybody out like that sort of movement. If you take transportation for granted and. People, my dad stole the rental car because we were there dropping me off for college, but buses didn't come.

[00:11:09] And just seeing the impact of the transportation system on this, you realize just how important it is, both in evacuation and response and recovery. And it all gets down to the human element. So I, the other part of transportation too, is that it's playing a role in causing a lot of these challenges, right?

[00:11:28] It's, I've identified that it's the largest sort of emission, the transportation sector in the U. S. And I know that this is something that you've looked at locally with L. A. Metro, but you are also the lead author of the transportation chapter of the 5th National Climate Assessment. And so I'm wondering if there is.

[00:11:48] From what you've seen locally with L. A. Metro, nationally as part of this larger thought leadership, what are some of the key messages that sort of you take forth for what the transit community is looking at with, when it comes to the climate crisis in terms of solutions and challenges?

[00:12:09] **Cris Liban:** That's a great question, and those are really great points, Julie in terms of your personal experience as well. And I'll answer your question this way. I'm a transit rider. I'm a transit rider who has a choice. I can either drive my car, I can afford to put, fuel in that car.

[00:12:28] But I chose to take transit, I chose to experience that with, the more than 70 percent of our transit dependent population here in Los Angeles. And for me to better understand, not only the struggles of people, but to better understand how to improve the transportation system.

[00:12:48] That I'm a big part of a product that I spouse for, that I work with my colleagues, the great colleagues here, 11, 000 strong here in L. A. Metro that we try to keep on time and reliable try to keep safe try to keep clean. And at the same time allowing for economic upliftment, of the whole community and reducing, burdens as a result, in many parts of our county and whatever those burdens are, we don't have time to talk about.

[00:13:21] We, we know what those are. I start. The answer that way because, I did mention earlier that, I was trained as a scientist but in my graduate degrees, I trained as as an engineer, and as an engineer, you tend to offer solutions.

[00:13:39] Compared to as a scientist, you're trained to ask the questions, right?

[00:13:42] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** Yeah, to diagnose the problem. Exactly.

[00:13:45] **Cris Liban:** Like the

[00:13:46] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** scientists diagnose, the engineers solve. It's that combo.

[00:13:50] **Cris Liban:** So sometimes I feel like I'm schizophrenic in a way. I'm asking the question, but at the same time I'm trying to answer the question, it's in a good way that's that's very fulfilling as well, because, again, going back to your question and on, what I've seen, what since store and, how do we like, reconcile, these experiences locally to what people might be thinking nationally.

[00:14:13] There's really no fundamental difference, I think, at least from, what I'm seeing the issues are, you did mention the national climate assessment, that came out back in the fall and President Biden. Rolled it out in in November last year, and we're so happy to.

[00:14:30] To actually, see the White House, roll it out. We were there in Washington, DC to get that through. And there were four key messages in the transportation chapter. I just wanna touch on, and then, maybe this is the. Be coming back to the local part, that the climate is real, right?

[00:14:48] Climate impacts are real. And that, there are multiple issues that are human caused, but, what we found out during that assessment is that, the risks of climate are

essentially getting reduced because of the. Strategies and the solutions that we humans. Have come about in realizing the climate crisis.

[00:15:10] So that's the first Part of that, the 2nd, part of of our assessment included this, discovery actually of the evolution of the meat of the definition of of transportation, transportation traditionally has been, linked to, oh, it's about buses and trains and airplanes and, ships and boats and, active transportation, bicycle, bicycling, and those types of modes and walking, right?

[00:15:37] But what we've discovered as well is that, because of the technologies that we've produced over the course of many years people are now talking about not only those, but the Internet, the delivery of information pipelines has always been part of the transportation definition, at least for us here locally.

[00:15:55] But, people may not necessarily realize that, pipeline distribution is also part of the transportation paradigm. The, and because of redefinition, or at least the the awareness on this new definition of transportation, we need to, as transportation professionals, actually think a little bit differently.

[00:16:15] Not only because of what we've seen during the pandemic, this black swan event and how to become more resilient, so that, black swan events like that won't affect us economically and socially and and in a significant way as we've seen it so we need to rethink about how we plan, how we construct, we Operate, maintain and procure, for these systems.

[00:16:37] So that's the 2nd message there. There are also the 3rd, there's also the 3rd message where, we need to think about the who benefits, other than clean air of transportation, that there are. Also called co benefits that, we may not be necessarily thinking about, the health benefits indoors, for example, reduce carbon dioxide because of the reduced carbon dioxide outside and, also inside, homes and we have a graphic in there where, we outline, what could be, and how policymakers should be rethinking about the co benefits of transportation but more importantly, I think is the 4th key message in there that, despite all the conversation about the technologies, the zero emissions vehicles that we might be producing that all the great discoveries and achievements, that we've seen, in the clean tech revolution, there are unintended consequences around the world that we hear in the United States, in this great economy, in this great country of ours.

[00:17:41] That we don't normally see and they're not aware of and we point out to those unintended consequences of mining for these battery

[00:17:51] **Speaker:** components in those

[00:17:53] **Cris Liban:** minerals, the unintended consequences of we have one co author, for example, and, they essentially have lived in in the Alaskan region, for a while.

[00:18:05] That's where she grew up and, they used to be able to go, across this tundra, from their house to the hospital, and now there is not, the permafrost is gone. It's not a big lake and it takes a few hours to actually go from their house to the hospital now.

[00:18:21] And also these other unintended consequences of, the end of life, disposition of of materials that we use, where does that go? And how does that affect, the ecosystems, that we hold dear and hold to protect, so that, we'll have green space, in many of our communities.

[00:18:40] So those are the kinds of things. And I think that last 1 really resonate in, in, in many of the public meetings that have gone to that last key message really resonated well with the audience that, wow, we have not necessarily thought of those. They have been meaning to talk about it, but us bringing out.

[00:19:04] Out those things out in the open, not only spurred conversation, but made people that I've talked to in the last, almost year about this assessment really assess, the strategies

[00:19:22] **Speaker 2:** yeah,

[00:19:22] **Cris Liban:** that they have long sought to implement, but now with the unintended consequences.

[00:19:32] Of those strategies as part of the equation are now not rethinking, but, making sure that, especially in overburdened communities not only here in the United States, but anywhere and anywhere else in the world, that those overburdened communities would not continue to be overburdened for the benefit of the few.

[00:19:57] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** Yeah, I really, I love that. Whole approach to it, because it seems like the sort of key messages are starting with the climate changes here. We are seeing the effects. It is very real, but it's not the only thing changing. So is transportation. So is the nature of the world. We've seen the 1 cobit event.

[00:20:19] There's a lot of change. We've seen success. We've been able to see yes, we can do something. We are not helpless. We are confident, capable people that can work to tackle this crisis. That feels very big, but we can take actionable steps to see that meaningful change, but with all of that, we're going to learn new things.

[00:20:39] And I think that's some of the, Oh yes, we might make an improvement here, but it could cost us somewhere else. And having that mindset. Of it's not just we're done, I gave the solution. We're at, but really thinking through a life cycle approach, which is, I think, such the unique part about the climate resilience and sustainability concept is thinking about how something is going to.

[00:21:01] Evolve over time, not just we're done. We did our capital project. It's over really. Interesting nuance that is starting to be promoted. And at the end of the day is going to have to be rooted in those communities where it is founded because it will live on in those communities. And I think, part of that.

[00:21:20] I think the part for me with the human element that always comes to when we're talking about climate crisis and impacts, I immediately can visualize what's going to be on the news. There's a hurricane or a wildfire, right? There's some visually. Have a strophic event heat is an area that is really hard to visualize, but it's so dangerous.

[00:21:43] And, from a perspective of, there's the impacts to. Transportation infrastructure, our buses, our overhead catenary system and our operations. But at the end of the day, the human health impacts are staggering. And so do you see as part of these, opportunities are you seeing anything with that common sense approach?

[00:22:04] Or community based solutions that have been effective and having these conversations about heat when it's hard. There's not some impressive rendering right that we can roll out, but it's something very personal and incredibly disproportionate impacts on those overburdened communities.

[00:22:22] **Cris Liban:** Yeah, that's those are really great points.

[00:22:25] And especially the last point that, it's. What we don't see that actually could make a significant impact in our lives. Does it is top of mind, for us here in the organization for me here in our agency and for my. For my work here we have been coordinating on with multiple stakeholders on several fronts and what are those right?

[00:22:52] So I'll give you some concrete examples of what those are. The 1st, 1 is, we've had campaigns, for example, with, our local university UCLA, on just creating awareness, on heat and what that really means to our citizens here, especially those who are waiting at bus stops on in summer, especially, heat is throughout the year, obviously, but especially during summertime, it's more intense, and, in certain, times of the year, it also is intense, I did mention earlier that I'm a transit writer.

[00:23:22] And that's really part of what I assess I want to make sure that, I understand how it feels to be, in a certain coverage of canopy and, how we can make improvements of on our canopy design, what amenities might be added on in addition to, the.

[00:23:42] Typical conversation of, oh, we don't have a. But shelter here or wow, this bench is hot because of the color that has been put on painted on it, right? That kind of thing. We have also been working on initiatives relative to bus stops in the last a few years, through customer experience surveys.

[00:24:03] We have been, identifying, many of the challenges that not only our transit riders, but, me on a personal note again are experiencing and, are putting my our minds on and how to reduce those. We don't own the sidewalk. It was

[00:24:20] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** a problem of where the jurisdiction ends, right?

[00:24:23] **Cris Liban:** Exactly. We don't own the sidewalk, the cities. own the sidewalk. We own the where the pole is, on the sidewalk. We own the pole itself and we own the the design but, what we have been doing, though, is that there is now a at least a rudimentary website, that people can visit in terms of what resources are available to cities especially those who don't have resources to reimagine bus stops, those that rudimentary website is being up, upgraded to a a tool that, cities can actually use for for their design as well as again, the rethinking of these bus stops and, we have engaged as well with community based organizations.

[00:25:09] We last April, for example we have partnered up with An organization called Tando Days and Homeboy Industries in here. For your listeners who don't know Homeboy Industries that's essentially a nonprofit organization where their goal is to essentially bring, former gang members into productive states of the community and they employ them, they create businesses for former gang members under the direction of father Greg Boyle to actually Immersed and again, become productive members of our community.

[00:25:42] We going back to the bus stop conversation, what we did with Tando Days, another nonprofit organization and Homeboy Industries, is we essentially held Camp Tando wherein we have a little bit over a dozen at risk youth. We paired them up with the best designer to, we can get our hands on.

[00:26:03] These are from Harvard or from up in Northern California and from some, a number of designers here in Los Angeles. We paired the at risk youth with these designers. We deployed them across the city, across the region in many different bus stop locations, and they came up with ideas, on how to create amenities to reduce impacts of heat, and it's quite an interesting exercise because, for the most part, Again, this is a direct input from most likely transit dependent youth.

[00:26:38] And for us to allow to have an insight in those, and we're in the process of exploring, how to implement that. And I think, the other part there is that, we also have been engaging, I did mention about tools and tools development. We've engaged with other from our sustainability office here we've engaged with our been engaging for many years with our customer experience group with our safety and security team and all of the other partners here in the region to make an assessment at each 1 of our bus stop locations at each 1 of our stations and allow for any changes, in either design criteria are there opportunities for, applying for grants, for example, are there opportunities for piggybacking on existing programs, working together with advertising companies, and allowing for those changes to happen.

[00:27:28] 1 final note, I wanted to mention that we haven't touched in here. Infrastructure is built. On the backs of laborers and laborers are out there and they experience, a significant amount of these heat stressors that we're talking about in here. There have been a lot of conversations not only with.

[00:27:49] With the unions, but also with the construction community on how to address those kinds of issues. And we're working towards, strategies to reduce those impacts. 1 thing I just wanted to mention, going back to the Philippines the. Philippine Department of Transportation visited us here, a month and a half ago, and that was back in July.

[00:28:09] And it was an interesting visit because, we've never really had a visit from Philippines, and much less government officials from the Philippines and, part of what I was trying to, what I discovered, preparation for that meeting Was the Philippines being as hot as it is if not the 1st, 1 of the 1st countries in the world to actually have a legislation to allow for workers who are working outside to have more breaks, to have more amenities so that heat impact on those workers.

[00:28:49] An emerging economy, a developing nation caring for its people. And I just said, wow, that's something we can learn from. And, here in Los Angeles, we have a lot of transit dependent populations, overburdened communities laborers because of our infrastructure programs. I think it's really time for us to take this more seriously.

[00:29:16] I'm not saying we're not, but take it more seriously and learn from countries like the Philippines on how that would work.

[00:29:25] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** I think that's, I'm so glad that you brought that up because that is an area, I think the EPA released this summer, some pretty staggering effects of heat and the construction industry had by and far the most heat related deaths.

[00:29:41] And it's really scary because it's. You shouldn't go to your work and be afraid you're going to die or be impacted. And being able to look at that and seeing the new OSHA discussions we're seeing at a national level. I think Maryland has just proposed their own requirements for outdoor labor as well, really pushing forward solutions that keep people safe so that we can continue to build and operate.

[00:30:06] Our infrastructure to keep our transportation reliable on time safe. I'm also really glad that you brought up that incredible example of re envisioning bus stops in the community, because it, to me, it really hit on that point of co benefits, right? Like it's more than just improving our air quality, but you're talking about, giving people a say in what their environment looks like.

[00:30:30] I'm bringing together folks that have. Then potentially outcast from their community and reintegrating them into setting what that vision can look like, making sure that we're thinking about accessibility safety on top of heat is really a wonderful way of

there's so much opportunity. That by looking at this crisis, it's yes, we are in a situation where we have to do something about the climate.

[00:30:56] We have to make change, but that change can have so much more impact and really improve. And so I'm wondering, as you. As you see implementing plans forward, you've gone through 17 years now of developing a plan, implementing a plan, growing that plan. 180 initiatives. What are your, what have you seen in that evolution that if you could tell folks in the impact community of hey, if you're just starting out, I wish somebody would have told me this or, this is what you have to look forward to, in both good and cautionary tales, if there's anything you'd want to share.

[00:31:35] **Cris Liban:** Yeah. Yeah, that's a really fascinating question to be candid, because I've been asked about that many times. I'm like, oh, you guys are the 3rd largest transportation transit agency in the country, 8, 9 billion dollars in budget, you have all this money coming in the next 40 years and beyond.

[00:31:59] Of course, you can do all that stuff and I'm like let's step back for a second, in terms of the evolution there really was nothing to copy, right? Back in 2007, there was a lot of conversation about climate and I still have the list. We had 32 unfunded mandates. Our board members gave me no funding, no

[00:32:24] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** money,

[00:32:25] **Cris Liban:** no funding, 20 volunteers, and I'll just say this matter of factly when we convened a group of people.

[00:32:34] In leadership positions here, 90 percent of them walked out because they had nothing to do with what they were hearing. And for the most part, I think that was a good thing that we have experienced that challenge because, I could say that, creating that visibility and the wins, matter how small really helped.

[00:33:05] Not only prop up the program. But for us to be able to create this awareness of the importance of a program like this. Not necessarily for this agency in particular, but for the people that we serve. And I think if the framing is like that, that this is really for our customers. This is really for, those transit dependent populations.

[00:33:36] This is really for those communities. And for them to somewhat become part of the conversation of the strategies, then we will have a bigger win, right? Not just a better win, but a bigger win. And I'm starting out the answer that way because, with the 32 initiatives, unfunded mandates, 20 volunteers.

[00:34:02] The visibility and just trying to win over people to not only become aware, but, get the importance of what we're trying to do that took at least five years, and one of my mentors he passed away already. Mr. Krishna Murthy, he sat me down one day and he said, Cris, you could think about the greatest things that you could think about in your life, but,

without sustainable source of funding, it's just that, you're dependent on, something that would trickle in, in terms of funding, then it's just that, and so we took this, after 5 years of creating that visibility and, having some success to it, we created this framework of it.

[00:34:47] How do we actually, try to self fund these programs? How do we create revenue so that, we can You know, reinvest it back to to these to these programs. And then, after doing that, how do we now we envision, more success, the program, so in 2014, we looked at different alternative forms of funding and financing, they were still emerging back then, I think we're really, fortunate to be living here in California to have a carbon credits market, in here and for us to be able to, participate in that but we also looked at, other opportunities of advanced mitigation other opportunities of, reinvesting back are the dollars that, we don't spend, as we conserve energy, conserve water, being really smart on, where we buy things having a sustainable acquisition program that was originally benchmarked from the Vancouver Olympics, and allowing for us to learn from that experience up in Canada that was very purposeful for us because, we didn't really have again, any template to, to draw from.

[00:35:55] And, that was the best example that we can get our hands on in terms of what makes sense to us as an agency, as an organization, and then for us now to actually work through, These strategies and making adjustments along the way. I still haven't mentioned this yet, but underlying all of these work is an environmental management system.

[00:36:16] And I apologize for those who don't know who that what that is. But at the heart of our program here is an environmental management system, based on ISO 14, 001 and at the heart of that framework is this, thinking of continual improvement, we cannot be perfect, but we need to be looking at the root cause of issues documenting, the strategies to reduce those root causes and then doing something about it and learning some from whatever the solutions are that we came up with the strategy.

[00:36:48] We came up learning from that and continually improve that framework. Has really set up, not only the continuing in very wise use of limited financial resources. Incorporating, the human element into this allowing for us to adjust, with the different underlying assumptions in terms of our design because of all this climate changes and in particular information that we're looking at, but also looking at the methods, that and how we could improve.

[00:37:21] Our system and our programs better and allow for those improvements to better create opportunities for people.

[00:37:31] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** I hear so much of the scientist and engineer dance of the sort of the continually diagnosing, solving, improving and it's, I think that it's just a. Incredible to have that as that route behind all of this work and be bringing in the community.

[00:37:50] I think that's wonderful guidance and advice and insight. Even for me to hear. I'm like, oh, this is really helpful. I know we're wrapping up on time. And I always like to ask as

you're looking out into the future. What is giving you a lot of hope as you're moving towards those 180 initiatives?

[00:38:07] There is the Olympics coming up. There's so much, right? And what, on top of the climate world, what gives you hope? And what are you excited to see that if we had this conversation five years from now, you hope would be a part of it?

[00:38:23] **Cris Liban:** I think it's beyond hope, right? One can aspire one can really work through one can ensure their own destiny our futures in our hands.

[00:38:33] I grew up with that mindset. I lived in a world when I was growing up where when freedoms are repressed we cannot say things that we wanted to say. And coming here in this country and adopting it as my country really makes Not only my life and the differences that we make here fulfilling seeing the difference in these programs and how these programs make a difference in people's lives.

[00:39:08] That's that's indescribable. And then going back to your question, as I was saying the things that, you know, and how we evolved from, where we were back in 2007 to where we are, no small achievement could be too small. Because we're a community of millions of people and wherever you are in the country and wherever you are in the world, you're a community of people, right?

[00:39:38] And so collectively, no small achievement could be too small. And people should reflect on that. We should reflect on that on that statement that, oh, wow, what does turning off the light switch, how could how could that make a difference? What does, example earlier, eating the last five grains of rice on the plate.

[00:39:59] How could that make a difference? A lot. And especially if you, if one has grown in a situation where, you don't really have any money to begin with, where you're struggling as I was, that, collectively, yeah, five grains of rice, eating that, versus, Wasting it, that could be a lot of dollars, in the long run.

[00:40:25] Go ahead. I'll add there. One of the favorite things, one of my daughter's favorite books, there's a quote of, no one person can do everything, but everyone can do something.

[00:40:35] **Speaker:** Yes,

[00:40:36] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** that sort of approach of collective together. We can and we will is it is indescribable when you see it and you see the power of it with communities that might not have resources individually, but when we pull them together, we can help.

[00:40:53] **Cris Liban:** And I'll just add, by saying that at least on this question, by saying that, five years from now, you ask that question what's the hope? We're all human beings, we have our own desires and our own goals in our lives, no matter how small, how big those are, collectively we live in one planet, right?

[00:41:13] And, thinking about that concept of, yeah, we're human beings we live in one planet, I'll end this part of the question by saying that, I remember my first week here in the United States and, I walked around our neighborhood, and where we lived and, people were like, oh, hi, good morning, and people were just, reading you, right?

[00:41:37] And if I had the difference in opinion, this was my first week or two here. If we have differences in opinion, we just bantered and debated about it, honestly, I miss those days when I could just be my myself. I'm not afraid to tell people who I am. I still am not afraid to tell people who I am and what my thoughts are.

[00:41:57] But at the same time, we are Living in a world that sees a challenge, a crisis even, and we need to think about the different solutions and strategies, and maybe those ideas that we don't agree with, there's value in just listening to those ideas and shaping what we actually think are the strategies that people need to be doing.

[00:42:36] And that's a shift in the framework of. Recent memory or and people debate, and if it doesn't conform to what they're thinking it may not be good enough. So I'm hoping that, in the foreseeable future, we go back to that state of, we just listen. And it's a very hard skill to learn because we just want to talk and we just want to advance our own ideas.

[00:43:13] Thanks. We said that, but at the same time, as we've been talking, collectively we live in this one place and no better way of living this one place than working together, to resolve our issues.

[00:43:29] **Julie Eaton Ernst:** Yeah, very well said, Cris, and I agree. I think being able to listen, understand perspectives and lived experiences is a powerful way to make those connections that we need to be able to make the change that we want to see, build the future that we want to see.

[00:43:44] We want to have for ourselves, for our children, for our pets, for our loved ones and really have that community. So I think this is at time that we have today. I just want to thank you so much for joining this impact podcast. Cris Liban again with LA Metro. Thank you so much for your time.

[00:44:02] And this is Julie Eaton Ernst with HNTB signing off.