

Sharon Banks: A Beacon This March, as the world celebrates Women's Month

A key figure in our celebration is the late Sharon Banks, whose tenure as the General Manager at AC Transit left an indelible mark on the public transit industry.

Sharon Banks, known for her dynamic leadership and innovative thinking, led AC Transit, the transit agency serving the East Bay in California, from 1991 until her untimely passing in 1999. During her tenure, Banks was revered not just for her administrative acumen but for her compassionate approach to leadership—a quality that resonated deeply with both employees and passengers.

Under Banks' stewardship, AC Transit experienced significant advancements. She was instrumental in modernizing the fleet, introducing environmentally friendly buses, and implementing community-focused initiatives. Her commitment to sustainable transportation solutions positioned AC Transit as a forward-thinking organization, setting standards in the industry for environmental stewardship.

Beyond her achievements in transit management, Banks was a pioneer in championing diversity and inclusion. She was one of the first African American women to lead a major public transportation agency in the United States. Her leadership broke barriers and opened doors for more women and people of color to take on significant roles in transit. Banks' legacy in this regard aligns seamlessly with SMART's core values of fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.

At SMART, we are profoundly inspired by Sharon Banks' vision and leadership. Her innovative approach to public transportation, particularly her emphasis on sustainability and community engagement, mirrors our mission to provide accessible, reliable, and efficient transit services. As we honor her this Women's Month, we are reminded of the importance of leadership that not only guides but also cares.

Sharon Banks also left a lasting impact through her role in the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO). Her work here further emphasized her dedication to ensuring equal access to opportunities in transportation for minority individuals. She was a strong advocate for professional development and mentorship, which has been a guiding principle in her career and for COMTO.

Our "Women In Transit" campaign at SMART is not just about celebrating the past; it's about inspiring the future. We believe in recognizing the contributions of trailblazers like Sharon Banks, who have paved the way for future generations of women in transit. Her legacy is a beacon that guides us as we continue to strive for excellence, inclusivity, and sustainability in all our endeavors.

As we celebrate Women's Month, let us all take a moment to reflect on the extraordinary contributions of Sharon Banks and many others like her. Their work has not just moved people from place to place; it has moved entire communities towards a brighter, more inclusive future. At SMART, we are committed to continuing this legacy, ensuring that the spirit of innovation and inclusivity remains at the heart of all we do in public transportation.