



TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD

Nuria Fernandez Recipient of the 2025 Frank Turner Award



Nuria Fernandez is the 2025 recipient of the Frank Turner Medal for Lifetime Achievement in Transportation. Ms. Fernandez, Principal Consultant/CEO, AMDC Consulting, LLC, is recognized for her significant contributions to the nation's public transportation landscape during her more than 35-year career. Her numerous accomplishments were forged through her ability to develop strategic partnerships, lead teams, and design value propositions which drove public policy and enhanced public transportation planning and operations.

The Frank Turner Medal for Lifetime Achievement in Transportation is a biennial award established in 1998 by a group of friends, colleagues, and admirers of Frances C. (Frank) Turner to honor him and to commemorate his extraordinary accomplishments in the development and construction of the U.S. transportation system. Turner was the initial recipient of the award in January 1999. The award recognizes lifetime achievement in transportation, demonstrated by a distinguished career in the field, professional prominence, and a distinctive, widely recognized contribution to transportation policy, administration, or research.

The award will be presented on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, during the Chair's Plenary Session portion of the TRB Annual Meeting, January 5-9, 2025, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.

Fernandez, who retired in February 2024 as the 15th Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), was named Deputy Administrator by President Biden on January 20, 2021, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate as Administrator in June 2021. She became the first woman of color to be confirmed to that position. During her three-year tenure at the helm of FTA, she led the agency in making transformative investments and creating policies that made public transportation stronger and safer nationwide. Shortly after rejoining FTA in 2021, Fernandez took over leadership of the federal transit response to the impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency on transit. This included a focus on maintaining safe travel for the transit workforce that moved frontline workers to and from their jobs; implementing transit practices that reduced COVID-19-related illness and fatalities; and coordinating the award of more than \$70 billion in federal COVID-19 emergency recovery funds.

Immediately prior to her role with FTA she served as General Manager and CEO of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) in California where she was responsible for 2,100 employees and oversaw programs, projects, and

NATIONAL
ACADEMIES

*Sciences
Engineering
Medicine*

services that provided mobility solutions to more than 2 million people residing and working in Silicon Valley. Among the highlights of her tenure was the completion of the first Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) heavy rail service into Silicon Valley, a ten-mile, \$3 billion line that opened to passenger service in June 2020. She also received federal approval in 2018 to extend the heavy rail service for another six miles. When completed in 2026, the rail service will total 16 miles with six stations providing transit alternatives for thousands of daily commuters around Silicon Valley.

Fernandez was also responsible for the creation of VTA's Innovation Center, an incubator to encourage collaboration, test the latest technology, and imagine new ways to keep the valley moving forward by leveraging the expertise of Silicon Valley's high-tech corporations and universities.

Prior to joining VTA, Fernandez held senior positions with several public and private organizations. She was Chief Operating Officer of the New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Senior VP of Design and Construction for the Chicago Transit Authority and Assistant General Manager at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. She also served as the Commissioner for the Chicago Department of Aviation, overseeing O'Hare and Midway Airports. In that position she launched interactive systems which helped travelers with disabilities find their way through the airports terminals and negotiated equitable licensing deals among retail concessions using terminal facility space. Fernandez has also worked in Latin America for CH2M-Hill, and Earth Tech (a Tyco International, Ltd company). She has seen and know the needs and values of both the public and private sectors as owners and clients.

Fernandez first volunteered her service to TRB in 1996 serving on the Steering Committee for the Workshop on the Use of Turnkey Approaches in Public Transit Project. Later she served as both a member and *ex officio* member of the TRB Executive Committee, a member of the Executive Committee's Subcommittee for the Transit Cooperative Research Program, and the Transit Cooperative Research Program Oversight and Project Selection Commission.

Ms. Fernandez served as Chair of the American Public Transportation Association and the Board of Trustees of the Mineta Transportation Institute and the Transportation Learning Center. She has also been a member of the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials and Airports Council International. An active member of WTS International, she is a key advocate for women's leadership and equality in business.

Ms. Fernandez, a native of Panama, holds a B.S. degree in civil engineering from Bradley University (Peoria, Illinois) and an MBA from Roosevelt University (Chicago, Illinois).