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Nthabsieng Kubheka

Bombela Operating Company, South Africa

Women in Rail

This year's award winners revealed

California dreaming

The Golden State has big plans for hydrogen traction

Growth plans

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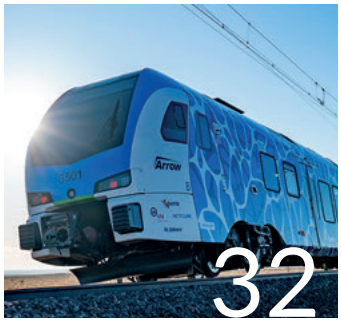


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Front cover

Nthabsieng Kubheka is one of 15 winners of this year's IRJ Women in Rail Award (p16). This issue shines a light on some remarkable women who are achieving great things in their work across the industry.

Photo: Bombela Consortium



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Inspirational groundbreakers

15 women in rail are motivational examples for others

IRJ's editorial team profiles the winners of our third Women in Rail Award

WELCOME to IRJ's Women in Rail Award 2024. Our now annual search for the brightest and best female leaders and managers goes from strength to strength. What follows over the next 12 pages are career profiles of 15 remarkable women working across the railway industry in all parts of the world.

Earlier this year, a European Rail Supply Industry Association (Unife) workshop held in Brussels on developing next-generation skills for our industry highlighted the increasingly challenging issue of recruiting new talent. More than ever before, rail is competing not just internally, but with other sectors, on attracting the finest minds, male and female, which will be required if rail is to achieve the transformational role that net zero and other societal changes are demanding of it.

But as the International Association of Public Transport's (UITP) secretary general, Mr Mohamed Mezghani, points out (p38), although women account for the majority of public transport users, they account for just one-fifth of its workforce. Or, to put it another way, 80% of posts are held by men. And Mezghani candidly says part of the problem is that men often don't realise the many barriers facing women. Simple actions, such as including female faces on recruitment material, can massively help stimulate interest and applications.

And, as speakers at the Unife workshop explained, despite the many potential hurdles, there is much to be positive about. An increasing focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Stem) subjects at high school level is increasing the number of girls considering entering what was for generations a male-only preserve. Attracting talent at an early age will be crucial for filling a new generation of mould-breaking roles.

The onus is now on our industry to respond by demonstrating that there are satisfying and substantial career paths that can match and even surpass those in other sectors, from accountancy to zoology.

What is clear from the many entries to this year's IRJ Women in Rail Award is the sheer determination and ability to accomplish outstanding achievements, often in the face of adversity. While they have undoubtedly had support from male and female colleagues, what sets our winners apart is their self-belief that in turn empowers colleagues and industry partners alike.

Judging by the calibre of the Women in Rail entries, we expect to see more outstanding individuals when we present the third IRJ Young Rail Leaders Award in our December issue. Nominations will open in October.

In the meantime, we invite you to join us in celebrating a truly exceptional group of employees who we are proud to present as the winners of our Women in Rail Award 2024.

Nthabiseng Kubheka

CEO, Bombela Operating Company, South Africa

Years in the industry: 3



BOMBELA is the joint venture led by RATP Dev that operates and maintains the 80km Gautrain commuter network in South Africa, running from Johannesburg to OR Tambo International Airport and Pretoria. Nthabiseng Kubheka joined the company as CEO in January 2021, the latest stage in her 27-year career in energy and rail. She is responsible for a business with over 500 staff and 1800 contractors that is estimated to contribute Rand 1.7bn ($US 93.3m) a year to the national economy.

Nthabiseng's nominator says she is a passionate champion for inclusion and diversity, and has introduced these values throughout Bombela. Her speciality is leading multidisciplinary teams, achieving success through her focus on high performance as well as staff development. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Nthabiseng's commitment to the safety of her employees and customers ensured that all protocols to prevent infection were observed, and that Gautrain services continued to operate. She ensured that jobs were protected and that the mental wellbeing of employees was prioritised.

A strong advocate for increasing the number of women in rail, Kubheka is working to build the next generation of leaders within Bombela. She was born in the township of Soweto and is a shining example of what can be achieved by women who are given the opportunity to thrive. To demonstrate the opportunities that are available, Bombela invites female high school and university students to meet the women in leadership positions at the company.

That Nthabiseng has risen to CEO level in the South African rail industry, which has tended to be as male-dominated as its counterparts elsewhere, is a very big achievement, her nominator says. "Everyone in South Africa speaks fondly and proudly of Gautrain yet many are not aware that the captain of this ship is a woman," adds Nthabiseng's nominator. "I am super proud of her work; South Africa should be too and so should the world. She is a winner."



Anastasia Austin

Assistant Vice-President, Sales and Marketing, Merchandise, CPKC, United States

Years in the industry: 16

CANADIAN Pacific Kansas City (CPKC), created following the $US 31bn merger of Canadian Pacific (CP) and Kansas City Southern (KCS) on April 14 2023, has only just recently celebrated its first birthday, but Anastasia Austin has already contributed to its success by playing an instrumental role in the integration of the two businesses. The team of 31 based in Canada, the United States and Mexico that she leads in her current role has delivered record growth of $US 200m year-on-year, and up 9% on 2022.

Anastasia's rail industry experience began as a senior accounting manager for capital investment at KCS. She rose to the position of vice-president of revenue and yield management and was asked to undertake a critical role in building the combined business as Integration Management Office (IMO) champion on the KCS side, co-leading with her counterpart at CP on work to integrate the Sales & Marketing teams.

As the KCS shares acquired by CP were placed into a voting trust until the US Surface Transportation Board (STB) approved the merger, both railways were limited in the amount of preparation they could undertake. The first few months at CPKC were "incredibly intense," the company says in its nomination, as the two commercial teams with their separate systems, processes and cultures were combined, bringing together nearly 200 employees responsible for over $US 10bn of revenue. Anastasia quickly solved the obstacles that are inevitable in a merger of this size, with her leadership and experience instrumental to the success of the integration process so far.

CPKC says that Austin stands apart from her peers due to her in-depth knowledge of both the revenue and expense side of the industry. She has combined this with technical, communications and analytical skills to tackle major change and deliver positive outcomes.

Anastasia is a champion for the industry, and for other women making their careers in rail and elsewhere. She is a mentor for the mentorship programme at the Henry W Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and an active member of the Women's Leadership Network at CPKC, where she has also been appointed to the Diversity and Inclusion Council.

Mariko Utsunomiya

General manager, Consulting Engineering Headquarters, Japan International Consultants for Transportation, Japan

Years in the industry: 30

SOMETHING of a trailblazer for women in Japan's rail industry, Mariko Utsunomiya joined JR East in the 1990s and worked in operating roles such as train crew, dispatching and operations planning, at a time when other female colleagues were scarce. After the government relaxed regulations restricting the working hours of female employees, she supported junior female colleagues to follow in her footsteps.

Mariko has been nominated by the president of Japan International Consultants for Transportation (JIC), Mr Masahiko Nakai, who says that her outstanding contribution has been to support the opening of the first metro line in Indonesia, the initial 15.7km of the Jakarta MRT network which opened in March 2019.

Mariko was project manager for the Operation and Maintenance Consulting Service (OMCS) project and its second stage OMCS2, which together ran for over seven years until December 2023. The objective was to help operator MRT Jakarta (MRTJ) prepare for opening and then operate and maintain the line unassisted. Since opening, average train punctuality has been over 99.9% without any major incidents.

As project manager, Mariko demonstrated strong leadership by fostering enthusiasm and creativity among the team, while displaying considerable adaptability when deploying Japanese >>





railway expertise to meet the client's needs. This included sharing with MRTJ the lessons learned from 40 incidents and accidents in Japan and elsewhere, in order to prevent similar occurrences in Jakarta.

One particular challenge was to complete staff training and safety certification in time for the opening date which could not be postponed, despite construction work having overrun. By closely liaising with contractors and the construction management consultant, Mariko was able to ensure that this was successfully undertaken while construction work was not in progress.

During OMCS2, Utsunomiya supported Indonesia's first female train drivers at MRTJ by introducing specialist training for those returning from maternity leave. Including engineering roles and senior management, women now make up 20% of the workforce at MRTJ, higher than is usual in Southeast Asia. As well as highlighting Mariko's contribution to this, her nominator believes that recognising her achievement as a pioneer in the field of engineering consultancy and project management will encourage women in rail around the world.

Kamini Sharma

Chief Architect,
National High-Speed Rail Corporation, India

Years in the industry: 12

SINCE 2017 Kamini Sharma has been chief architect at National High-Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRCL), which is building India's first high-speed line from Mumbai to Ahmedabad. She is responsible for complete architectural design of all stations, the operations control centre, training institute and other buildings, as well as planning multimodal integration (MMI) schemes at 12 city stations. Kamini also represents NHSRCL in planning development around stations, working with project funder Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), Japanese consultants, central and state government departments and city planning authorities.

Kamini has been nominated by her colleague Mr Alok Katiyar, director, electrical and systems, at NHSRCL, who says that she has been instrumental in creating a positive and open working environment, following an inclusive approach. Kamini readily shares her insight gained over 33 years as an architect in the public sector, enabling team members to hone their skills, while providing them with experience and training at national and international level to enable them to meet their full potential.

As a designer, Kamini is tightly focused on meeting the needs of all passengers, irrespective of age, gender or degree of impairment. Building India's first high-speed line is a technology-oriented project where the major focus for NHSRCL is implementing Japanese Shinkansen best practice. Making the entire team aware at all times of the importance of passenger safety, convenience and comfort has been a challenge, but Kamini has successfully incorporated these principles in station design. Japanese practice has been modified to meet Indian requirements in terms of culture, passenger behaviour and climate, without compromising the basic functions of high-speed rail.

Kamini is chair of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (Posh) Committee at NHSRCL. She has also reinforced the sense of personal security and dignity among female colleagues by raising awareness of the issues facing women in the workplace through talks and seminars, and by encouraging them to participate in sports and cultural activities at NHSRCL. Kamini regularly holds informal discussions with younger female colleagues to ensure that any concerns and grievances can be addressed without adverse fall out.



Kristin Leese

Deputy Chief Engineer, Production
Amtrak, United States
Years in the industry: 14



WITHIN Amtrak's infrastructure maintenance activities, Kristin Leese leads the production maintenance team undertaking work such as rail and sleeper replacement and high-speed surfacing. She has led efforts to more than double production rates and reduce unit costs, while also improving safety performance, which now stands at its highest level ever.

Kristin has been nominated by a colleague who says that her leadership has helped to ensure a safe ride for Amtrak passengers while maintaining on-time performance and increasing service reliability.

Kristin has shown calm leadership even when under immense pressure, such as when responding to derailments. She continues to strive for excellence and drive continuous improvement among the team.

One of the biggest challenges that Kristin has overcome was securing extended track time in order to undertake work more efficiently on the line from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. As this involved cancelling more train services, internal and external stakeholders were highly resistant to the idea, but she was able to secure support and commitment from senior management with the result that the project was completed in half the time.

A leader of the Notch 8 employee resource group at Amtrak that is dedicated to promoting women in rail, Kristin has taken time out to create videos shared by Amtrak encouraging more women to get involved in the industry, particularly on the operations side, where they are severely under-represented. She is also an executive sponsor for Management 101 classes to help train the next generation of leaders and frontline supervisors at Amtrak.

Her nominator says that Kristin is an outstanding leader and excellent role model, pushing the boundaries of what is possible in the rail industry while encouraging her team to continuously improve. She has already accomplished a great deal so far and her positivity and leadership will continue to empower women and others.

POWERING INNOVATION.
LEADING CHANGE.
THAT'S THE THOROUGHBRED WAY.

Congratulations, Kathleen Smith for being recognized as one of IRJ's Women in Rail

As the leader of our industrial products and coal marketing, Kathleen plays a key role in powering the global economy and moving goods essential to everyday life. For nearly 30 years, she has been responsible for leading significant, wide-reaching efforts across several business functions that have improved our company as a whole. We are proud to honor her for this recognition and thank her for the impact she has made to creating a railroad of the future.

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NS NORFOLK SOUTHERN



Genevieve de Michele
Project Director (Sector 1 North), Gluco Consultants, Australia, contracting with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads
Years in the industry: 14

GENEVIEVE de Michele is a highly accomplished project director. With 14 years of experience in engineering, including nearly three years as project director within Strategic Rail at the Queensland state government's Department of Transport and Main Roads, Genevieve has established herself as a proficient and influential leader in the Australian railway industry.

Genevieve's expertise and project management skills are notably demonstrated in her role leading the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line project, a new 38km railway that is planned between Beerwah in southeast Queensland and Caloundra and Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast. Work in the first phase will involve construction of 19km of double track from a junction at Beerwah, as well as protection of the rail alignment all the way to Maroochydore, under her guidance, the business case for the project was completed ahead of schedule and within budget.

Beyond her project work, Genevieve is deeply committed to fostering collaboration and innovation within the engineering community. She actively engages with stakeholders and regularly facilitates interactive workshops to address complex interface risks and to develop multi-modal solutions that will benefit Queensland's transport infrastructure.

As a qualified civil and construction engineer, Genevieve brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role, having previously worked on prominent road projects in Queensland such as the Legacy Way tunnel, the Kingsford Smith Drive Upgrade, and the Inner City Bypass Upgrade.

Genevieve's passion for empowering the next generation of engineers is evident in her role as a mentor for various universities and initiatives. Through her mentorship and advocacy efforts, she strives to inspire young women to pursue careers in Stem fields and break barriers in traditionally male-dominated industries.

Driven by a profound belief in the transformative power of transport projects, Genevieve's nominator states that she is committed to delivering infrastructure solutions that enhance accessibility, affordability, and sustainability for communities across Queensland. In addition, her dedication to promoting mental health and work-life balance reflects her holistic approach to engineering and underscores her commitment to the well-being of both her team and the broader community.

Genevieve's nominator adds that her professional accomplishments, combined with her passion for mentorship and advocacy, make her a respected and influential figure in the engineering community. A tireless dedication to driving positive change and her vision for a more inclusive and sustainable future also continue to inspire those around her.



Rebecca Thissell
Director of Financial Reporting and Technical Accounting,
The Greenbrier Companies, United States
Years in the industry: 3

REBECCA Thissell has quickly become a key cog in the team at Greenbrier during her three years with the company, taking on numerous leadership roles. Among the achievements in her position as director of financial reporting and technical accounting, Rebecca created a global technical accounting matters tracker, which has consolidated the company's most significant matters into a central repository. The tracker can be easily monitored and reviewed, which is especially important for a company with activities spanning the United States, Mexico, Europe and South America.

Rebecca is credited by her nominator for showing initiative and dedication to improve processes and methodologies within accounting, which has helped to improve Greenbrier's overall efficiency and productivity. She has taken the lead on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) work for the accounting team and played a key role in forecasting the expected accountancy consequences for Greenbrier of creating a European leasing business. She presented this information to the company's executive management, helping to inform the decision-making process. In addition, she undertook a leadership role with the transition team as Greenbrier embarked on a process to sell its marine operations, working to help ensure the transaction proceeded smoothly.

Rebecca is also part of the company's GBXCELs Women's Leadership Employee Resource Group where she helps to promote professional development and contributes to fostering a sense of well-being among employees. "Her participation encourages others to join and become involved, and reinforces a positive work environment for growth," her nominator writes. Her work will also help to position Greenbrier for the future. In particular, a project to issue approximately 70 global accounting policies and align the same accounting methodology across the company will improve reporting efficiency, presenting a clear picture of performance, helping to support future development decisions.

Abi Johnson

Senior HR Business Partner, Network Rail, Britain

Years in the industry: 1

THE Anglia route at British infrastructure manager Network Rail is rolling out a new programme of employee forums and Abi Johnson is playing a key role in their development and implementation, despite her comparatively limited rail industry experience.

The Angli-her forum was set up in early 2023 to enable women at Network Rail Anglia to share their good and bad experiences of working in rail, aiming to make the company a place where women can thrive.

Abi has been nominated by her line manager who says she has secured the support of the Network Rail Anglia executive team. As well as personal safety in the workplace and personal development, the group has tackled the difficult and often taboo subject of losing a baby which included guest speakers from Child Bereavement UK. This was a challenging and emotional session, but the feedback received from the group was overwhelmingly positive.

In December 2023, Abi organised the first face-to-face event where over 70 women attended, including industry colleagues from outside Network Rail Anglia. Guest speaker Marcia Williams, head of diversity and inclusion at Transport for London (TfL), provided inspiration by sharing her career journey with the group. Angli-her has grown from 30 members to now over 70 regularly attending, with interaction taking place outside this forum on an intranet chat group set up by Abi.

Her vision for 2024 is to gain the support of male colleagues in championing key issues such as challenging unacceptable behaviour in the workplace. Following the success of Angli-her, Abi has further championed equality, diversity and inclusion by creating Your Space, Network Rail Anglia's forum for black and minority ethnic employees.

Abi continues to challenge the ways of working in the business, making others stop and think about their impact and what they can do to include others. Her determination is clear and she has delivered these initiatives through her commitment and building strong relationships with leaders, colleagues and external partners.





Miho Ihara

Partner and Vice-President, Anglophone and Lusophone Africa, CPCS, Canada

Years in the industry: 18



MIHO Ihara has been nominated by her employer, Canadian consultancy CPCS, which says that her rise from the position of consultant to partner and vice-president, sitting on the CPCS board, is testament to her determination and leadership. Ihara has increased the company's presence in Africa and now leads a diverse, multidisciplinary team advising major clients that include the World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB).

Miho had been working on rail projects in Africa and the Middle East since 2007. Her big break came in 2014 as project manager and economist on a major regional project for the East African Community (ECA). She later led work to update Railway Reform: A Toolkit for Improving Railway Sector Performance for the World Bank, and at present is taking on the role of project director for an institutional review of the rail sector in Namibia and for improving the financial sustainability of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (Tazara).

The challenges that Miho has faced during her career at CPCS include one major project that her employer says was fraught with cultural tension. Her mediation skills diffused conflict, bringing the focus back on delivery. At the most difficult times, she rolled up her sleeves and got back to work where others failed, giving new impetus to a stalling project. Although several factors were beyond her control, Miho brought the project to a successful conclusion, producing a clear and actionable infrastructure plan and a happy client.

Miho has become an influential leader and mentor at CPCS. Born in Japan and now based in Canada, she deeply understands the challenges facing underrepresented groups in the workplace and has become a voice for diversity and gender equality, creating a safe space for women who can face challenges when negotiating in a male-dominated environment.

Her actions have inspired a company-wide effort to promote inclusion, and have prompted colleagues to create an informal employee resource group for women at CPCS. In the field, Ihara is a firm advocate of including female expertise and businesses owned by women when building a project team for the client.

Šárka Moučková

Vice-President, Human Resources, Škoda Group, Czech Republic

Years in the industry: 10

LIKE all rail industry companies, Škoda Group is in a fight to secure a new generation of talented young professionals that will drive the company forward. Šárka Moučková is playing a leading role in devising recruitment initiatives for the company, which are proving highly successful. Indeed, her innovative strategies have not only attracted a wave of fresh talent, but also positioned Škoda as a hub of opportunity for aspiring professionals in the Czech Republic and beyond.

For example, Škoda is focused heavily on building relationships and collaborating with schools and universities. Šárka helped to develop a trainee programme, which has exposed these students to real-world experiences of working at Škoda, and is proving successful in providing a pathway into the company, with 90% of trainees going on to become full-time employees.

As well as attracting new talent, Šárka focuses much of her work on nurturing the company's existing personnel, acting as the driving force for several key employee development initiatives. This includes an employee evaluation system, which identifies potential in employees and offers opportunities for them to grow and advance within the company. Among the most important initiatives has been a programme to provide employees on maternity leave with the option to remain connected with the company by undertaking part-time roles, enabling them to balance childcare with work and keeping their skills sharp.

Šárka's nominator credits her amazing ability to turn challenges into opportunities as one of her overarching strengths. For example, one of her most difficult projects was working alongside a polytechnic in Indonesia to provide opportunities for students to join Škoda. Complex logistics, cultural differences and bureaucratic hurdles were all overcome, with the result that Škoda was able to attract a number of talented Indonesians to join the company under a two-year paid internship. Šárka's determination and can-do attitude was critical to the success of the project.

"Šárka is a true leader and innovator in the rail industry," her nominator writes. "Her visionary approach to HR management has not only strengthened Škoda Group's workforce but has also elevated the industry's standards."





Susan Peterson Sturm
Senior Director, Business Development and Strategic Partnerships, Wabtec, United States
Years in the industry: 25

FOR the past 15 years, Susan Peterson Sturm has been an active contributor to critical infrastructure cybersecurity groups. Her work has ranged from contributing to standards development, such as the international industrial cybersecurity standard ISA 62443.2.3 on patch management for industrial automation and control systems (IACS), to supporting sector working groups on software bills of materials. Her efforts have been focused on areas that will enable industrial cybersecurity solutions to be adopted at scale.

Susan led the rollout of the first product cybersecurity programme to receive IEC 62443 certification at GE. She says that implementing this across a $US 6bn business required significant effort to influence and educate distinct stakeholder groups, requiring her to deploy strongly-honed influencing and change management skills to efficiently scale innovation-based technology. Susan engages stakeholders and secures their involvement with empathy and prioritisation to drive meaningful change.

In this way, she has significantly altered perceptions in how cybersecurity is addressed and delivered at scale in critical infrastructure, also advising rail sector-focused cybersecurity start-ups and participating in industry groups in her effort to drive greater maturity in mission-critical industrial cybersecurity. Susan is a member of InfraGard, a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the private sector which aims to protect critical infrastructure. It brings together representatives of businesses, academic institutions, state and local law enforcement agencies, and others to share intelligence and prevent hostile acts against the US.

Her work to support female colleagues includes mentoring women at the start of their careers under the Women in CyberSecurity (WiCyS) programme, as well as ongoing mentoring of other colleagues who are currently under-represented in the cybersecurity industry. Outside work, Susan is chairperson of One Warm Coat, a non-profit organisation that provides free coats to children and adults in need.



CSX

csx.com

Congratulations
Maryclare Kenney
2024 Women in Rail

Maryclare's exemplary leadership of the CSX intermodal and automotive sales and marketing functions has been instrumental in driving unparalleled service to our customers and partners worldwide. With a 13-year career at CSX and seven years of commendable service in the U.S. Army, including combat operations in Iraq, Maryclare brings a unique blend of expertise, dedication and innovation to her work.

Under Maryclare's leadership CSX's TDSI auto facilities have repeatedly won industry awards for meeting or surpassing industry quality standards, and customers have repeatedly recognized CSX as the top rail provider of domestic intermodal service.

Maryclare's commitment extends beyond her professional accomplishments. She also mentors individuals within CSX and military veterans transitioning to the rail industry, exemplifying her dedication to fostering talent development and helping strengthen our communities.

Congratulations, Maryclare, for your remarkable contributions to the rail industry, and your well-deserved recognition as a Woman in Rail Award honoree.

Veronica Elena Bocci

Cluster Coordinator for Ditecfer, Italy, and Vice-President of the European Railway Clusters Initiative (ERCI)

Years in the industry: 13

VERONICA Elena Bocci, the current Cluster Coordinator for the District for Railway Technologies, High-Speed Networks, Safety and Security (Ditecfer), an association of Italian companies and research institutions, and vice-president of the European Railway Clusters Initiative (ERCI), has been a prominent figure in the railway industry for over 13 years. Her contributions span the development of key organisational structures, the orchestration of technology-focused events, and the leadership of numerous significant European railway research and development projects.

Veronica played a crucial role in the creation and development of ERCI, which was formally established as a legal entity in 2022. As a member of the board of directors and vice-president, she was instrumental in shaping ERCI, which now includes 17 clusters from 16 European countries. This network represents a vast number of companies within the railway sector. Her efforts in organising Acceleration events have been particularly notable.

Her influence extends to several significant European projects where she has served as author, coordinator, and partner. One such project is STARS (STrategic Alliances boosting Railway SMEs), which aims to develop innovative approaches to ease the adoption of advanced technologies by SMEs in the railway value chain. Another key initiative is Leader 2030, which seeks to enhance the European rail supply industry's capacity to meet the EU's vision for a transformed railway system by 2030. Additionally, Veronica has been involved in the S-Access project, which is designed to help SMEs in the rail supply industry participate in international public procurement. Other notable projects include Exxtra, aimed at creating synergies and training activities among railway clusters, and Peres, which promotes the internationalisation of European Rail SMEs in non-EU markets.

Veronica's presence is also strongly felt at international conferences, fairs, and exhibitions. She has delivered speeches at prominent events such as Expo Ferroviaria, InnoTrans, and Eurasia Rail. As a member of the European Commission Expert Group on the Competitiveness of the Rail Supply Industry, she contributes to improving market access for SMEs. She also participates in setting certification and standards in the railway sector within India, collaborating as a railway expert with CEN/CENELEC.

Veronica's commitment to community service is evident through her support for colleagues and educational initiatives. Veronica has promoted Unicef through various activities and organised special technical courses for young people in Pistoia, providing them with practical experience and job opportunities in the railway industry.

Her leadership is characterised by strategic decision-making, resilience in challenging situations, and a collaborative approach. Veronica has managed financial crises by prioritising the salaries of her colleagues and has taken risks by organising events without prior approval from cluster members. She develops comprehensive business plans for Ditecfer, inspiring her colleagues with clear vision and strategic suggestions. Her management of European projects showcases her ability to lead diverse teams and deliver successful outcomes.





Maryclare Kenney

Vice President of Intermodal and Automotive, CSX, United States

Years in the industry: 12

MARYCLARE Kenney oversees the sales and marketing strategies for the domestic and international intermodal and automotive sectors at CSX. Her responsibilities encompass more than half of CSX's business volume - specifically a $US 2.3 billion intermodal business and a $US 1.1bn automotive business. Additionally, she manages automotive terminal operations, ensuring safety, vehicle quality, and operational efficiency.

Maryclare's leadership at CSX has been marked by significant achievements. Under her direction, CSX's TDSI auto ramps have been industry leaders in automotive quality, earning awards for six consecutive years. Her strategic initiatives have also led to CSX being recognised as the top rail provider in the *Journal of Commerce's* inaugural domestic intermodal service scorecard in 2023. This accolade underscores her ability to steer her team towards excellence in service delivery and operational performance.

In terms of industry impact, Maryclare's tenure at CSX has been transformative. Appointed in 2018 to lead CSX Intermodal during a period of

significant operational change, she played a crucial role in reassuring customers about CSX's commitment to service and growth. Her collaborative efforts with commercial and operating teams were instrumental in identifying solutions that addressed customer supply chain needs. This leadership was particularly vital during the Covid-19 pandemic when she and her team developed innovative solutions to navigate supply chain disruption, resulting in CSX Intermodal achieving the highest growth among Class 1 railways in both 2020 and 2021.

Her early career at CSX was shaped by her service in the US Army, where she achieved the rank of captain and held leadership positions within the 3rd Infantry and 101st Airborne divisions, participating in counter-drug operations in the Bahamas and combat operations in Iraq.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Maryclare is committed to giving back to the community and supporting under-represented groups. She mentors several women at CSX and assists military veterans entering the rail industry. As an executive sponsor of CSX's Military Business Resource Group, she actively engages in CSX Pride in Service community investment events, collaborating with organisations like Operation Gratitude and the Wounded Warrior Project. Beyond her corporate responsibilities, she contributes to various organisations, including the United Way, St Paul's Catholic Church/School, and the University of Notre Dame ROTC. She is also a member of the United Way Tocqueville Society and The University of Notre Dame Sorin Society.

Her academic and professional accomplishments have been recognised by the *Jacksonville Business Journal*, naming her a Transportation Innovator, and by Diversity MBA, which listed her among the top 100 under 50.

Maryclare exemplifies leadership, innovation, and dedication in the rail industry. Her strategic vision and commitment to excellence have significantly contributed to the success and growth of CSX's intermodal and automotive sectors. Through her mentorship and community involvement, she continues to inspire and support the next generation of leaders in the industry.

Susana Lozano Arribas

Head of International Commercial Services, Renfe, Spain

Years in the industry: 44

SUSANA Lozano is a seasoned professional with a rich and diverse career spanning over four decades in the railway industry. Joining Renfe in 1980, she quickly made her mark by assuming various operational roles within the company, notably becoming the first woman to work as a rail traffic controller at San Sebastián station in the Basque Country. Her early experiences paved the way for her future leadership roles.

Throughout her career, Susana has held key positions across different divisions of Renfe. In 1999, she transitioned to Renfe Freight, where she spearheaded initiatives to enhance international traffic, particularly in the container, automotive, and iron and steel markets. Her leadership was instrumental in expanding Renfe's presence across Europe. >>

Wabtec congratulates
Susan Peterson Sturm
and all of this year's
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In 2016, Susana embarked on a new chapter by joining Renfe Viajeros, where she played a pivotal role in driving international sales distribution. Her expertise in cross-border traffic was further highlighted in 2019 when she took on the role of manager for cross-border traffic between France and Spain, navigating complex challenges with determination and efficiency.

Beyond her professional achievements, Susana is a staunch advocate for gender equality in the workplace. Leading a multinational working group, she promotes inclusivity and diversity within Renfe, inspiring her team to excel and embrace challenges with professionalism and dedication.

One of Susana's notable accomplishments is Renfe's successful entry into the French market. Overcoming various obstacles, including obtaining safety certificates and training operational personnel, Susana's vision and drive have solidified Renfe's position as a benchmark operator in high-speed rail services in France, challenging the incumbent operator, SNCF.

Susana's commitment to excellence, coupled with her passion for the most complex projects, continues to drive innovation and growth within Renfe. Her leadership style, characterised by resilience, inclusivity, and a relentless pursuit of success, inspires those around her to reach new heights in the ever-evolving railway industry.

Kathleen Smith

Vice-President Industrial Products and Coal Marketing, Norfolk Southern, United States

Years in the industry: 29

KATHLEEN Smith has held leadership positions across Norfolk Southern (NS) during a near 30-year career with the Class 1 railway. With expertise in negotiating, relationship building, customer service, and team leadership, she is credited for consistently creating tangible results, which are not only benefitting her own business unit, but the Class 1 railway as a whole.

In her current role, which Kathleen took on earlier this year, she leads the activities of the company's largest business unit, which generated $US 7.9bn in revenue, or 65% of the company's total, in 2023. She has also held roles overseeing industrial development, property, market research and forecasts, and business process and analytics teams. Her time leading the automotive industry business was particularly impactful, her nominator states, with the business unit reaching $US 1bn in revenue under her stewardship.



Kathleen is at the forefront of helping NS anticipate where markets are heading, according to her nominator, who says she is able to steer the company to consistently fulfil the needs of the national and global supply chain. Among recent achievements are the successful lease of Lambert's Point Docks in Hampton Roads, Virginia, to Fairwinds Landing under a 30-year agreement reached in 2022. Plans for the property include redeveloping the area into a world-class maritime operations and logistics centre that will support the offshore wind, defence and transport industries.

Kathleen's influence at the company extends to acting as a mentor for other female employees, both formally and informally. She has helped female and minority students enrolled at Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business, her alma mater. In addition, she has served as a member of Northwestern University's Transportation Business Advisory Council, where alongside other senior-level executives working across transport, she advises and offers real-world insight to the university's Transportation Center, helping to influence research and educational programmes.

Locally, Kathleen has been a member of Georgia Allies, a partnership between state government and private corporations to promote Georgia's business development efforts. She also attends the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and sits on the organisation's tech council.

Internally, Kathleen has been a member of NS' DE&I Alliance Business Resource Group where she helps spearhead changes and initiatives to foster a diverse and inclusive environment across the organisation. She was also recently appointed to serve on the board of the National Freight Transportation Association.

Consistent across Kathleen's success is her deep understanding of the company's existing and future demands. Her nominator says she "masterfully seeks new or unique ways for NS to meet the needs of its customers and the communities where it operates" and her achievements have been recognised by the railway's senior management. Indeed, she seems poised to continue to play a leading role in the railway's continuing development over the coming years. IRJ

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