

# Curb Enthusiasm Episode 3 Transcript

00;00;00;00 - 00;00;03;20

**Emily Weidenhof**

Welcome to Curb Enthusiasm. I'm Emily Weidenhof.

00;00;03;23 - 00;00;05;06

**Diniece Mendes**

And I'm Diniece Mendes.

00;00;05;09 - 00;00;08;14

**Emily Weidenhof**

On this episode, we chat with Midori Valdivia.

00;00;08;17 - 00;00;15;27

**Diniece Mendes**

Midori Valdivia is a transportation operations and urban planning leader committed to building cities that center people.

00;00;16;00 - 00;00;28;28

**Emily Weidenhof**

She has had an extensive career in public service, holding senior roles at the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

00;00;29;01 - 00;00;41;20

**Emily Weidenhof**

Throughout her career, she's focused on issues like securing funding for transport agencies, operationalizing equity and prioritizing disability access, and building climate resilience.

00;00;41;23 - 00;00;48;24

**Emily Weidenhof**

All right. Today we are super excited to welcome Midori Valdivia to our podcast.

00;00;48;25 - 00;00;49;19

**Diniece Mendes**

Welcome.

00;00;49;21 - 00;00;55;00

**Midori Valdivia**

Oh thank you. I'm so excited to be here. Thank you Diniece and thank you, Emily.

00;00;55;02 - 00;01;02;16

**Emily Weidenhof**

The MTA is not only the largest transportation network in North America, but it's incredibly complex.

00;01;02;18 - 00;01;17;23

**Emily Weidenhof**

And New Yorkers are not shy about airing their transportation grievances. So our listeners are very familiar with what's not working with the MTA. Can you shed some light on what is working with the MTA?

00;01;17;26 - 00;01;32;23

**Midori Valdivia**

Yeah. Thank you so much. So, as you know, I'm a board member of the MTA. I've been doing that for about two years, so there's nothing like showing up to a party and people just saying, okay, this is my problem with the B train.

00;01;32;25 - 00;01;58;06

**Midori Valdivia**

This is what happened to me. So one, I love those stories because it gives me a certain insight. Although I take the subway and bus nearly every day. It's great to hear from other folks about what's happening with them. In terms of what is working, I think what's working is our workforce. The people that run the system every day, there are 70,000 people that work at the MTA.

00;01;58;08 - 00;02;29;10

**Midori Valdivia**

Pretty large number. As you know, it's the largest system in North America. It's also the oldest system, I believe, in the Western Hemisphere. And the A train doesn't magically show up to that platform. There are people that operate it every day. People that inspect trains people in the rail control center that make sure those trains are running. Station cleaners who are cleaning up gunk, agents who are out and about, talking to tourists, talking to people that need support.

00;02;29;13 - 00;02;31;17

**Midori Valdivia**

So I would say our people are working.

00;02;31;19 - 00;02;47;13

**Emily Weidenhof**

Fantastic. So, in addition to keeping up with a really challenging system and the great care that the workforce at the MTA brings, what are some more innovative efforts, and forward looking technologies at the MTA?

00;02;47;15 - 00;02;54;10

**Midori Valdivia**

Yeah, there are so many projects happening at the MTA, and I think in a way it feels invisible to the average rider, right?

00;02;54;10 - 00;03;14;23

**Midori Valdivia**

Because so many of the projects that we do are really for 2 to 3 years from now. But I was chief of staff at the MTA in 2018 when we were rolling out the countdown clocks. And at the time, that was seen as really innovative, I don't know, for, you know, for students who are listening. But there was a time, like in 2015 where you're just standing on that platform and you're like, maybe a train will come.

00;03;14;25 - 00;03;38;05

**Midori Valdivia**

It usually did, but maybe it'll take eight minutes. Maybe it'll take three minutes. So I think the idea of deploying those countdown clocks and getting them out there in a record time that I got to be witness to was really, really impressive. So I think although that is an innovation that happened like in 2018, we're still reaping the benefits of today because it's still kind of building.

00;03;38;07 - 00;03;56;27

**Midori Valdivia**

But I think these kind of more customer facing type of technology, I think there was a certain kind of culture at the MTA, which is like, hey, we moved trains from A to B, and it's like, no, we move people. That's what we do. And I think our workforce on the ground really understand that because they're interacting with people every day.

00;03;56;29 - 00;04;18;22

**Midori Valdivia**

But then the folks who are like, you know, within the MTA and having to kind of navigate and you both know what it's like navigating bureaucracy, having to navigate bureaucracy. And you're like, well, the endgame is to get this project done. And then here's the chief of staff and annoying chief of staff, me, who says, well, actually, the endgame is to make sure that people can use and understand this technology well.

00;04;18;24 - 00;04;35;10

**Midori Valdivia**

And those are two different end games, right? And so that's been really interesting when we think about innovation. One way we get some of those kind of products, countdown clock was different, but one way we get some of those products within the MTA is something I am proud of. That's still around today. It's called the Transit Tech Lab.

00;04;35;12 - 00;05;01;24

**Midori Valdivia**

It was, a partnership originally between the MTA and the partnership for New York City, which is, you know, a civic organization, business focused organization. And we put

together essentially a lab. So new technologies and startups could be deployed within the MTA without having to go through the whole rigamarole. It was a sandbox and like accelerator for these technologies.

00;05;01;24 - 00;05;29;24

**Midori Valdivia**

And that's how we got accessibility focused wayfinding. That's how we were thinking about cameras on buses and automated, you know, bus enforcement cameras. So we had tested out a whole slew of technologies during Covid. All those technologies were Covid focused, Covid recovery focused. So I'm excited about that, that there is a sandbox because it's really hard to work as an outside vendor with a \$20 billion organization.

00;05;29;24 - 00;05;33;20

**Midori Valdivia**

I don't deny that, you know, so that's something exciting that's happening.

00;05;33;22 - 00;05;39;10

**Emily Weidenhof**

Great. Fantastic. Yes. Big is hard. We know that very well. New York City DOT.

00;05;39;13 - 00;05;52;13

**Diniece Mendes**

So we're going to take a little step back and talk a little bit about your career. Walk us through your journey. You've had experience working at a state agency, working at the city multi-state authority before moving to a private practice.

00;05;52;16 - 00;06;05;27

**Diniece Mendes**

So can you tell us about that journey and what influence sort of those leaps, and what lessons you've learned along the way? I think it will be helpful for our listeners to sort of understand, particularly for folks that are entering into the sort of the work field.

00;06;06;00 - 00;06;13;03

**Midori Valdivia**

It's actually like a tough question, because I think we want it to be a linear narrative about careers.

00;06;13;08 - 00;06;41;13

**Midori Valdivia**

Well, first I did this and then number two happened to the number three happened and voila, I'm here. And that definitely wasn't necessarily the path for me. I knew originally I actually came into this space, from a deep interest in immigration and housing. And that's what I focused on in policy school. My first policy issue, I ever worked on as a young Coro fellow in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, before my time at the Port Authority was rodent control.

00;06;41;15 - 00;07;04;02

**Midori Valdivia**

My city council member at the time was like, I need you to run this legislation on rodent control. And here I am like, I'm interested in housing and immigration. And you want me to work on what, like rodent control? Like, I don't like rats. You know, like, I was just like, maybe he's misunderstanding, like what I'm really interested in, but it's like, no, it's not what Midori is interested in.

00;07;04;02 - 00;07;27;09

**Midori Valdivia**

It is what the city needs. And the city had a rodent control issue. So, I worked on that issue. And I always said I will work on pretty much any issue if I have a great boss and if I have teammates who are willing to work and be in that foxhole with me. So, from rodent control, I went to the Port Authority, which is the bi state entity that was created in 1920.

00;07;27;09 - 00;07;46;26

**Midori Valdivia**

And anybody who joins the Port Authority gets steeped in the Port Authority history. And so I went into the Port Authority and I just went in from a place of learning. I love my time at the Port Authority. I was almost there like seven years, I think. I started off as a leadership fellow, which is a management training program, and it was an incredible program.

00;07;46;28 - 00;08;08;14

**Midori Valdivia**

And then I had an opportunity to go to the City of New York, where I worked at the Taxi and Limousine Commission, and I worked, for who's now Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi. Amazing boss, incredible leader. And when, you know, these new tech companies came into town, Uber, Lyft. I got really interested. Like, what does new mobility mean?

00;08;08;21 - 00;08;28;21

**Midori Valdivia**

Will they now help to shape the city? What does it mean to potentially create tiers of transportation in our city? So I went to the taxi commission where I got an opportunity to work on that, under really great leadership. And then my old boss called me. Like I said, I don't care if I work on rodent control, if I have a really great boss.

00;08;28;23 - 00;08;51;02

**Midori Valdivia**

My old boss called me and he said, do you want to join me at the MTA? And given that I rode the subway every day, I just felt like, how could I not? You know, let's get in on it. That's how I ended up joining the MTA. And then what I'll say is, at the end of the day, it's all about, the deep relationships that you form in the pursuit of making change.

00;08;51;02 - 00;09;07;12

**Midori Valdivia**

That's what I'm in it for. So it's not just the checklist of things we did or you do things like through people. You do things with people because people do not build bridges alone, and people do not build new subway systems alone.

00;09;07;14 - 00;09;11;02

**Diniece Mendes**

So the human element is really important for all of this.

00;09;11;04 - 00;09;18;25

**Emily Weidenhof**

Definitely. And I feel that empathy is so kind of core to community building and coalition building.

00;09;18;28 - 00;09;35;05

**Emily Weidenhof**

And I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about, empathy through your work and how our transportation needs change as we live and grow through our lives? And also what is universal.

00;09;35;08 - 00;09;37;26

**Midori Valdivia**

So you both have children, right?

00;09;37;29 - 00;09;38;12

**Emily Weidenhof**

Yes.

00;09;38;13 - 00;09;39;09

**Diniece Mendes**

Yeah.

00;09;39;12 - 00;09;48;24

**Midori Valdivia**

Transportation needs to change, like, dramatically through the cycle of our lives. I mean, I'm a mom, and I felt like my needs completely changed, right?

00;09;48;24 - 00;10;13;15

**Midori Valdivia**

When my baby was on me, when I was baby wearing her, the subway was easy. It was fun. Stroller days, not fun. And it's been a shock to the system to see yet another way in which I interact with transportation, where like my heart is on someone else's body. You know, my daughter's body and she's, you know, running through the sidewalks.

00;10;13;15 - 00;10;39;11

**Midori Valdivia**

And I have to teach her red light, green light. And I want the world in which my daughter can feel very comfortable on the sidewalk, very comfortable on the street. So one, I think, I'm thankful that the City of New York and DOT has taken a lot of measures and recognize that this is, you know, from the previous administration with Vision Zero, recognize that this is such an important part of how we live in our city.

00;10;39;13 - 00;11;16;27

**Midori Valdivia**

Two I think, how does empathy work? It's interesting, the word empathy. Although policymakers are called upon to have empathy, so often people the decision making table will engage on policy based on kind of where they sit, right? Or where they stand or what lived experiences they have personally. In addition to the data, what is most salient I have found for policymakers is often a lived experience that they personally have or lived experience that they have felt or heard or seen visibly and it has touched someone.

00;11;17;00 - 00;11;48;09

**Midori Valdivia**

So now I'm talking about policymaking as to your point, Diniece, like there's a very human element. There is a deeply human element to policymaking. And so that's why it matters who's at the policymaking table. If we have everybody with the same experience, and we're going to get a very select type of policies. But I have found that what is better to make the case, especially for our most high level decision makers who are juggling 500 different policy issues at any time.

00;11;48;12 - 00;12;06;23

**Midori Valdivia**

How do you make it salient in a way that decision makers can really feel like the issue? And that's actually not that hard in transportation, because when you work in transportation, you get to go to where the thing happens. So, Emily, do you get to go to like, the streets that you worked on?

00;12;06;26 - 00;12;16;29

**Emily Weidenhof**

Yeah, absolutely. One of the best parts, I think, about working for city government in the city you live is you get to make your streets better every single day.

00;12;17;05 - 00;12;57;07

**Emily Weidenhof**

And I like how you've talked a little bit about advocacy. And I think thinking about safety as also being fun and how we could we can never think about building advocacy for safer streets soon enough. And so much of New York City DOT's work around safety, education, around open streets and schools and getting kids out in the streets, understanding and learning from a young age how to be safe, but also how to have fun and very critically seeing how small things can dramatically change their experience.

00;12;57;07 - 00;13;21;00

**Emily Weidenhof**

And that should be normal for New Yorkers everywhere. You can change your streets. And that has a huge, it's small, but it has, you know, a huge a huge life and love to see where, all the amazing things we're doing, how that grows and shapes the advocacy and planning world in New York City in the future.

00;13;21;02 - 00;13;47;13

**Diniece Mendes**

Yeah, absolutely. And I think just the, the focus of sort of designing for all really benefits all, not for sort of, you know, a few, right. Thinking about folks of all abilities, at any given time, we could actually have an impairment that may require us to, to benefit from sort of an elevator or a ramp or, some of those other, infrastructure that's built.

00;13;47;15 - 00;14;13;06

**Diniece Mendes**

So it's really important to think about that. And, you know, how we interact with that infrastructure. So, we're going to transition a little bit to talking about sustainable transportation. And so, sort of DOT's work around bus priority and the infrastructure associated with that and how that can be a catalyst. Particularly in connection with sort of the infrastructure at the MTA and sort of how those sort of speak to each other.

00;14;13;07 - 00;14;20;10

**Diniece Mendes**

Can you speak a little bit about how New York City DOT's work can be supportive in this regard?

00;14;20;13 - 00;14;36;16

**Midori Valdivia**

DOT is a linchpin here, like so critical. Our listeners may not know unless you're from the City of New York and you're steeped in this work, may not know that. You know, bus service to a certain extent is there's a division of responsibility here.

00;14;36;18 - 00;14;58;21

**Midori Valdivia**

The bus stop in the street is owned by New York City DOT. The MTA runs the service. There are some services are fully funded by the City of New York. And so we aren't just like partners. We are coworkers. Right? We have to work in sync to make sure the buses run in New York City.

00;14;58;23 - 00;15;33;05

**Midori Valdivia**

So, you know, always my pitch is more bus lanes and more dedicated bus ways. That is always my pitch. I'm biased because, we run the largest bus fleet in North America. We have over 5000 buses. We're working to make them electric. And buses to a certain extent,



as much as people talk about subways are the circulatory system of, you know, buses are like the system when you're trying to get crosstown anywhere, when you're trying to just run an errand in your neighborhood, you're more likely taking a bus.

00;15;33;05 - 00;16;08;21

**Midori Valdivia**

In terms of sustainability, buses in New York are the model by which other cities could potentially learn from. Other cities are building bus rapid transit systems. We have our own version of BRT. It's very impressive, SBS, I love the express bus. I'm an express bus user. But when it comes to how cities share information, and how cities work together and how New York becomes a global leader in bus transportation, or just transportation in general.

00;16;08;21 - 00;16;35;23

**Midori Valdivia**

Buses are where it's at. Because many metro areas in the United States don't have subway systems. They will not have subway systems. They may in the future get light rail. They may in the future get, you know, some kind of rail system, but they will have bus systems. And if we can really define and show the world what, how quickly our buses can run, that's all.

00;16;35;29 - 00;16;58;15

**Midori Valdivia**

That's the end game, right? How do we get people faster to where they need to go? Then we will be the global leader. I think, I believe Polly Trottenberg was one of your guests. She was such an incredible partner in crime when the MTA and New York City DOT were working together on the 14th Street Bus Way.

00;16;58;18 - 00;17;28;26

**Midori Valdivia**

That was such an exciting and impressive innovation. And a lot of people had many bets that New York City DOT and the MTA together would not be able to pull this off. Well, we showed them. There are people from across the country that come to 14th Street and they're in awe, right? And so let's build on that success. DOT has been a great partner in our bus network redesign.

00;17;28;26 - 00;17;59;09

**Midori Valdivia**

So our bus network redesign started in 2018, 2017, really as part of a whole rethinking of buses. Historically at the MTA prior to 2017, and even in the parlance of an everyday New Yorker, when people think about New York, they think about our subways. They don't necessarily think about our bus. But right now, our bus ridership has recovered more post-Covid than necessarily our subway riders.

00;17;59;11 - 00;18;36;00

**Emily Weidenhof**

We now have more bus riders, or pretty much at Covid levels, so or pre-COVID levels. So that's like really impressive. And so how do we build on that momentum? And I think the way we build is to continue to work together with communities, to push to make sure that the thousands of people every day that ride in one bus, which is a more climate friendly option, which is an option that actually puts people on sidewalks waiting for buses, getting that bottle of ice tea at the bodega, getting your egg and cheese.

00;18;36;03 - 00;18;58;16

**Midori Valdivia**

Like brings more business to retail at major commercial corridors, which is good for business. Let's get those people who are waiting longer than they should wait right now. Let's get them on buses because they're taking the bus anyway, and let's get them to places faster.

00;18;58;18 - 00;19;04;22

**Diniece Mendes**

And really underscoring, I think you talked about this earlier, just the importance of sort of the people behind all of the work.

00;19;04;25 - 00;19;12;24

**Diniece Mendes**

And the value in inter-agency coordination, the fact that you do need to sort of work, lockstep together.

00;19;13;00 - 00;19;13;09

**Midori Valdivia**

Yeah.

00;19;13;14 - 00;19;29;22

**Emily Weidenhof**

And I love your articulation of the co-benefits of investment in transit. It's so much more than just a little faster of a bus ride. And I think we saw with the 14th Street Bus Way that allowed us to unlock opportunities for additional public space.

00;19;29;22 - 00;19;57;09

**Emily Weidenhof**

We expanded plazas. We created shared streets, more space for green. And I still remember that feeling of walking along 14th Street for the first time after the bus was implemented, and it was so quiet. And you had this moment of less traffic means such a better experience for pedestrians in addition to faster transit for New Yorkers.

00;19;57;11 - 00;20;12;26

**Diniece Mendes**

And unique about that one, being able to provide priority for goods movement as well and ensuring that sort of commerce and flow also was maintained. Critically important to DOT's mission for moving people and goods. So great example of a collaboration.

00;20;12;29 - 00;20;20;04

**Midori Valdivia**

It's so great. Like people come from all over and they marvel at, like, what is this?

00;20;20;11 - 00;20;41;26

**Midori Valdivia**

Oh and when my friends visited, I was like, oh, I'll take you to a restaurant in the East Village, we'll stop at Union Square and we'll take the bus to the village. You know, it was just like, it's great. It's become such like, I don't know if it gets enough credit for being such an iconic part of New York now, right in the middle of Manhattan.

00;20;41;28 - 00;21;00;23

**Midori Valdivia**

And I think some of the work that you all do is about unlocking imagination, right? Unlocking imagination for what goods movement could look like, like imagination for how people interact with public streets. And that that's probably like, that's difficult work. So thank you.

00;21;01;00 - 00;21;11;23

**Diniece Mendes**

And rewarding. And so throughout our conversation today, you've really centered the voices. And also just the importance of the people behind the work.

00;21;11;26 - 00;21;23;00

**Diniece Mendes**

Can you share some thoughts on sort of what our profession needs? To continue to grow in diversity, particularly as a woman of color in transportation planning?

00;21;23;06 - 00;21;34;06

**Midori Valdivia**

Thank you. Diniece, I feel like I should ask you that question. I'm going to ask for your opinion after, I think we need, three things. I think one, we exist, women of color.

00;21;34;06 - 00;21;58;28

**Midori Valdivia**

Black, brown, Asian, indigenous. We exist today in the industry. And there are so many of us. And yet there's this, I think, false narrative that's out there that there's not enough people in the pipeline. Look at all of the STEM investments that have been made in engineering schools. You know, who's going to college, who, who's getting in. So, so the pipeline exists.

00;21;58;28 - 00;22;22;03

**Midori Valdivia**

And so it's about really seeing potential and women of color and saying, yes, do this job, you know. Yeah, go for the promotion. So I think one, the pipeline exists. And I think sometimes there's a narrative that like, oh, well, we can't, it's like, no, there is a way to do recruitment and a way to engage in a way to think about potential and people.

00;22;22;09 - 00;22;42;21

**Midori Valdivia**

And we do that a lot with other classes of folks in our industry all the time. They have potential. They have potential. But I see time and time again, women of color leaders being, emerging leaders. Right? Because we haven't been in the spaces long enough. We don't have necessarily what my friend Tiffany-Ann Taylor said like role models in the field.

00;22;42;24 - 00;23;04;19

**Midori Valdivia**

But they are a comin', you know, like we have Polly Trottenberg, Veronica Vanderpool, Nuria Fernandez, we are these amazing women in US DOT, like really, who have been paving the way, but you know, the stories I've heard from that generation of women is, oh, yeah, they were picked at 20 some years old to do this cool thing.

00;23;04;19 - 00;23;39;18

**Midori Valdivia**

And then and, and it's like, well, why not this cohort of folks? So, I'm really excited to make that pipeline visible. Two, then I think it's about access. I think a lot of this work, is very technical in nature. And so for some that's seen as an impediment, I'm not sure why I never saw it as an impediment, but I think in a way I had folks that encouraged me that said, like you, you also have value.

00;23;39;18 - 00;24;00;17

**Midori Valdivia**

And I have a story I really love about access. I had just become special assistant to the executive director of the Port Authority. And that was a really big deal for me. I think I was in my 20s. I was like, oh, I don't know what I'm doing. I think I'd like finally bought a second suit, you know, because I don't I don't really like suits.

00;24;00;17 - 00;24;03;04

**Midori Valdivia**

I do like jackets. I don't like suits. So

00;24;03;04 - 00;24;03;25

**Emily Weidenhof**

Same, same.

00;24;04;01 - 00;24;06;22

**Midori Valdivia**

Yeah? Okay. Right, right. You know what?

00;24;06;23 - 00;24;10;03

**Dinece Mendes**

We have options! We thought fashion was going to make its way into the podcast.

00;24;10;05 - 00;24;22;24

**Midori Valdivia**

Please promise me there will be a fashion episode of this podcast. So, I bought, like, my second suit, and I remember that the Port Authority is a very formal environment. A lot of people suits.

00;24;23;01 - 00;24;43;04

**Midori Valdivia**

There's the main table. That's the conference table. And then there is the row around the conference table. And I had already been at the Port Authority for five years. So I like kind of like knew my place. I'm like second row, maybe third row, you know. And I sit down and I'm, you know, this newly, like, appointed special assistant.

00;24;43;06 - 00;25;07;21

**Midori Valdivia**

And there was maybe 1 or 2 people of color at the top of the Port Authority, and one of the folks was the chief operating officer. His name was Ernesto Butcher. Panamanian man. Great leadership during 9/11, the events of 9/11, heralded for saving a lot of staff members, in the towers. And he always seemed very serious to me.

00;25;07;21 - 00;25;27;14

**Midori Valdivia**

Intimidating, you know, this older man, and where there's like a business plan meeting and my boss said, oh, can you just, like, rep me at this meeting? And I think he didn't really understand, like, what that meant to, like, tell like a young Latina woman just rep me this meeting with, like, 50 people. So, I'm like, okay, second row girl here, sit down.

00;25;27;14 - 00;25;52;28

**Midori Valdivia**

And Ernesto you know, like pointed me calls me over and he's like, you sit here right next to me. And now, decades later, I'm like, wow, I'm the person that needed to be invited to the table, what does that mean? But it was just honest about who I was at the time. I was like, sure, my title changed, but my positionality didn't change.

00;25;53;00 - 00;26;11;29

**Midori Valdivia**

And Ernesto was saying like, take your positionality, you did get this job. So just sit right here next to me. We talk about like inviting people to the table, but that does not happen

enough. So when people say, oh, we want to be allies, how do we want to be allies? I was like, why are you asking those folks to be on panels?

00;26;12;01 - 00;26;32;05

**Midori Valdivia**

Are you asking those folks to take that interesting priority project to see what they can do? Because other people are always given, the benefit of the doubt, so why not, you know? And are you asking that person to lead the project, invited to the panel, invited to that conference? Because, as you know, a lot of public sector folks don't get to go to conferences.

00;26;32;05 - 00;26;56;11

**Midori Valdivia**

It's tough to get out there. We cannot pay for travel on our own. So, access is really important. And so, Tiffany and I created this women of color and transportation and climate infrastructure because we didn't feel like there was a space in the other industry associations where, there wasn't like business development involved, you know, especially for folks in the public sector.

00;26;56;11 - 00;27;20;06

**Midori Valdivia**

And I think I kind of ended up creating something that I wish I had when I was 23 years old, being like, I don't know what I'm doing, I bought my second suit. And now the questions that we have for each other might involve childcare, might involve how do we angle and think about this next position? Or, dealing with these issues and how do we kind of get to that next step beyond this issue.

00;27;20;09 - 00;27;37;12

**Midori Valdivia**

But that's a next step of like building community, because without community and solidarity, it's really hard to navigate this very male dominated. As we sit here as three women. It's really, really cool. It's a very male dominated industry. And so how do we change that? But what do you think, Diniece?

00;27;37;12 - 00;27;42;10

**Diniece Mendes**

Yeah, I mean, I think, sponsorship is extremely important, mentorship as well.

00;27;42;10 - 00;28;05;08

**Diniece Mendes**

Being able to have folks to, to be able to be a sounding board and have that additional validation. But you also have to be your own cheerleader in many ways, making sure that you are sort of being sort of proactive and sort of putting yourself out there. But I think most importantly, the culture of sort of anywhere that you work has to be inclusive.

00;28;05;08 - 00;28;31;08

**Diniece Mendes**

It has to foster a sense of belonging to ensure that you feel seen and that you can be your show up as your best self, or just, you know, who you are, and really, sort of celebrating our differences and the value that we bring together and like having a place like that is going to foster and like, grow that level of interest and even confidence, for folks to, to, to be active participants.

00;28;31;08 - 00;28;55;13

**Diniece Mendes**

So, yeah, I know I think it takes a combination of things. And I really like your point on building community because that's really important. And feeling, seeing and having that sense of support. As someone who rides the subway frequently, we talked about that as well, and now being a mom as well, what would you say is sort of the biggest breach of subway etiquette?

00;28;55;15 - 00;29;15;10

**Midori Valdivia**

I have two, I have one that my daughter does. I think it's so embarrassing. She comes on and it's crowded and she's like, where am I going to sit down? And usually, a lovely person stands up and gives her a seat. And I'm so embarrassed. So, I'm working on that right now because this my daughter can stand up and hold the pole.

00;29;15;10 - 00;29;21;21

**Midori Valdivia**

It's not a big deal. Number two,

00;29;21;23 - 00;29;48;23

**Midori Valdivia**

I think littering on the subway is just, so to your point, a little bit earlier about like, culture and how we treat each other in public spaces. It just like, gets to me. I don't mind loud music on the subway. It's super fun and I enjoy it. I enjoy loud music, but that's me. You know? So, some people might say that I know, I know in particular, family members are like, I don't like loud music.

00;29;48;24 - 00;29;55;27

**Midori Valdivia**

It's like, you're in the city, but littering on the subway. I don't love it. Not cool.

00;29;55;29 - 00;30;07;01

**Emily Weidenhof**

And finally, one question we ask every guest, what is something about the future of transportation that you are most enthusiastic about?

00;30;07;01 - 00;30;18;18

**Midori Valdivia**

The leadership that is coming up behind us or emerging right next to us, the leadership that is here, the woman of color who are rising in this space.

00;30;18;21 - 00;30;36;01

**Midori Valdivia**

They are incredible. And I think leadership that is centering people more in our work is something to be really excited about. Because transportation isn't just concrete, right? It's the people. That's what I'm excited about.

00;30;36;03 - 00;30;40;04

**Emily Weidenhof**

Great. Thank you. Well, Midori, we could literally talk to you all day.

00;30;40;06 - 00;30;42;16

**Midori Valdivia**

And we have!

00;30;42;18 - 00;30;47;16

**Emily Weidenhof**

So, until next time, thank you so much for your time and your insight. Very grateful.

00;30;47;18 - 00;30;52;01

**Midori Valdivia**

Of course. Thank you all for having me. I feel so honored to be included as a guest. Thank you.

00;30;55;01 - 00;31;10;26

**Ydanis Rodriguez**

Hi. My name is Ydanis Rodriguez, commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation. Thank you for listening to Curb Enthusiasm by New York City DOT. This episode was produced by Michael Santos with video support from Sigurjon Gudjonsson, Juan Vega, and Nazareth Battice. Theme music by Michael Santos. Curb Enthusiasm is available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other major streaming platforms.

00;31;10;28 - 00;31;42;12

**Ydanis Rodriguez**

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