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Eno Future Leaders Development Conference Statement of Interest - 2/19/16

When reviewing last year's Eno Future Leaders Development Conference itinerary, I feel like a kid in a candy store. A "capitol hill briefing," a "glimpse inside the US Department of Transportation," a "briefing by the US Secretary of Transportation"—yes please to all! The thought of going to the Eno conference is incredibly exciting to me due to my deep passion for the field of transportation, the invaluable insights I would gain on the policies and processes that drive our transportation system forward, and the prospective connections I would make with existing and emerging leaders in the field. I recognize the great impact this opportunity could have for me in my pursuit of a leadership role in the transportation field, and I feel like my background provides me with the foundation needed to reap the greatest benefit from the experience.

My passion for transportation planning and engineering began when I started walking and bicycling for transportation in college. While I initially began walking and bicycling because it meant I no longer needed to buy a parking pass or worry about finding parking, I quickly came to realize the myriad of ways in which non-motorized transportation benefited me. I was getting great exercise, being more social, spending more time outdoors, saving time and money, and travelling emissions free. This revelation led me to recognize that transportation is something we depend on every day, and if we can make it work better, it can have a transformative impact on our lives, our communities, the economy, and the environment.

Upon receiving my undergraduate degree, I followed my passion and secured a job in transportation planning at Alta Planning + Design in Chicago where I worked for several years prior to attending graduate school. I worked in Chicago when the City was experiencing a walking, bicycling, and transit renaissance. During this time, I gleaned firsthand insight on how transportation systems can be optimized and harmonized through creative design, thoughtful policies, innovative technology, and strong leadership. While I enjoyed this work immensely, I decided to return to graduate school at Georgia Tech last fall to advance my understanding of transportation planning and design, to better understand its interaction with other important systems such as land-use, natural systems, and the economy, and to experience other facets of the profession through internships and deeper interactions with local and federal transportation agencies. I feel very fortunate to be immersed in a field I love—one that has the power to shape our communities for the better.

My role as both student and research assistant continues to bolster my passion for transportation and knowledge of the field. This experience, coupled with the extracurricular opportunities I am taking advantage of, are preparing me for lifelong leadership in a transportation career. For example, I recently returned from the TRB Annual Conference where I presented my independent research evaluating road diet projects on roads five lanes and greater at the Eisenhower Fellows Showcase. I was also elected to both student ITE and APA boards where I have been planning and organizing several student events such as on-site tours with Atlanta transportation professionals and professional networking events. Finally, I have been a director on the international board of Young Professionals in Transportation for several years, and I am currently serving as the organization's deputy chair.

In closing, I feel that my substantial professional experience gives me the perspective to make the most of the Eno Future Leaders Development Conference. I also believe that my continuous pursuit of leadership roles shows my understanding that leadership is not something that can be solely learned in the classroom, but depends on seeking out responsibility and rising to meet it. I recognize the potential impact that this opportunity will have on my leadership development in the transportation field, and how it will better prepare me to foster real improvements in communities and lives. It is an honor to be recognized as a future leader in transportation, and I sincerely thank you for considering me for the Eno Future Leaders Development Conference.