

Statement of Interest

My name is Jordan A. Bennett, and I am currently a Master's student in Urban Planning at the University of Michigan. My academic and professional journey has been driven by a deep passion for creating equitable and sustainable transportation systems that serve all communities, particularly those historically underserved. I am eager to participate in the Leaders Development Conference (LDC) as I believe it will be a pivotal step in advancing my career and developing the leadership skills necessary to drive meaningful change in the field of transportation.

My interest in transportation began during my undergraduate studies in Civil Engineering, where I became fascinated by how transportation infrastructure can shape the social and economic fabric of cities. This interest grew into a commitment to addressing the disparities I observed in access to reliable transportation in various communities. The decision to pursue a Master's degree in Urban Planning was fueled by my desire to delve deeper into the intersection of transportation, equity, and urban development.

At the University of Michigan, my research has focused on the impacts of transit-oriented development (TOD) on low-income communities. I have been particularly interested in exploring how TOD can be leveraged to create more equitable outcomes, ensuring that the benefits of improved transit access—such as increased economic opportunities and reduced commute times—are shared by all residents, not just those in more affluent areas. My thesis examines case studies from cities across the U.S. to identify best practices and strategies for inclusive TOD.

In addition to my academic work, I have gained practical experience through internships with both the Detroit Department of Transportation and a local urban planning consultancy. These experiences have provided me with valuable insights into the complexities of urban transportation planning, particularly the challenges of balancing efficiency with equity. For example, during my internship with the Detroit Department of Transportation, I worked on a project to redesign bus routes to better serve low-income neighborhoods. This experience highlighted the importance of community engagement and the need for transportation planners to be attuned to the voices of those most affected by their decisions.

The LDC represents an unparalleled opportunity for me to deepen my understanding of the policy and political processes that shape transportation systems. I am particularly interested in learning how federal, state, and local policies can be aligned to support more equitable transportation outcomes. The chance to engage with experienced policymakers and practitioners will provide me with the knowledge and connections needed to translate my academic research into practical solutions that can be implemented at scale.

Moreover, I am excited to join a community of like-minded peers who are equally passionate about the future of transportation. The LDC's focus on networking and collaboration will allow me to learn from others' experiences and perspectives, and to build relationships that could lead to future collaborations in research and practice. I believe that the diverse backgrounds and expertise of the conference participants will enrich the discussions and provide new insights into the challenges and opportunities in transportation.

In conclusion, my academic research, combined with my practical experience, has prepared me to contribute meaningfully to the Leaders Development Conference. I am committed to advancing the field of transportation in ways that promote equity and sustainability, and I am confident that the LDC will help me develop the leadership skills necessary to make a lasting impact. I am grateful for the opportunity to apply and look forward to the possibility of participating in this transformative experience.

Thank you for considering my application.

Jordan A. Bennett

Master's Candidate, Urban Planning, University of Michigan