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WWU Transportation Intern

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title:

Organization Worked For:

Student Name:

Internship Dates:

Faculty Advisor Name

Department

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STUDENT SIGNATURE _____

DATE: _____

**Transportation Internship
Transportation Services WWU
Bellingham, Washington**

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Urban and Environmental Planning & Policy
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Spring 2023

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Introduction

I have worked as the Active Transportation Coordinator since Spring of 2021 and have gradually taken on increased responsibilities. In January 2023, Jillian Trinkaus, who had been my manager for almost two years, left to work at the Oregon Department of Transportation, meaning I was responsible for continuing some of the work she had been doing. This provided an opportunity for me to gain experience in working directly with contractors; hiring, training, and managing employees; and generally taking on a stronger leadership role.

Description of Duties & Outcomes

Starlight Shuttle

I continue to help in managing the Starlight Shuttle. I created a data collection system so we take the data received by TransLoc, who provides the app for the shuttle, and put it into a more usable format. This is a temporary solution until Transportation Services and Laz Parking can get a new app provider who meets their needs. The data I collect splits rides by shift rather than day, as shifts span two days from one night to the next morning. Data structured in this way was more usable and better represents what is occurring. The team uses this data to determine the total number of riders, when there is peak demand, what happens with ride cancellations at peak times, and other information. This information will be in our year-end report and will be used to benchmark our current system with the new app. Issues with data formatting and finding ways to reformat it to be more useful is an essential skill that I have been able to develop in my position.

I also organized a ride along with the manager of the Starlight Shuttle from Laz Parking. This was a great opportunity to see what issues students are facing on the ground that might not come up in formal meetings and to get a better sense of how the shuttle is functioning. I created a list of questions to ask the driver and overall observed and took notes on the experience. This ground truthing has been important to understand shortcomings in our service and an essential first step in finding solutions to providing more timely, safe, and comfortable service.

Hiring, Training, and Managing

Having the most experience in the active transportation section of Transportation Services, I was responsible for much of the hiring, training, and managing of my replacement and for the training of the new Commute Options Program Manager. I wrote the position description for the Active Transportation Coordinator position, read cover letters and resumes, determined who to interview, organized our three-person hiring committee, and played a role in determining who to hire. This was a great opportunity to prepare for the application and interview process for my future job from a side of it I had not experienced before. It made me more aware of what employers are looking for, what types of questions to expect to be asked, what types of answers employers want and provided a great experience to put on my resume and mention when interviewing. I also created training materials, researched and learned how to train someone coming into a position, updated the legacy document which holds all information about what my position typically does and has done throughout the year, and

learned all the steps involved in getting a new employee ready to begin working. I also have been and am currently working with the new Commute Options Program Manager to assure that the programs we run continue to run well once I leave. My current manager does not know the details required for training someone to take on the role so I have been largely responsible for making sure she is able to begin working alongside the new Active Transportation Coordinator. This involves the same steps as getting my replacement trained as well as creating a list of all projects that have yet to be finished and steps to take to finish them.

Micromobility Counter SEJF Grant

The bike counter project has been picked up and worked on by several SEJF groups in the past and one of my goals in my position was to make the project a part of my position. I began work on this project in November of 2022 and was able to put together a working group with Beth Hartsoch, Steve Hollenhorst, Seb Genge, and Malcolm Duncan-Graves. By getting students in paid positions and Western employees on board, it made it much easier to get support for the project from Facilities and the SEJF Committee. The team will continue with the project, adding Andrea Reiter and without myself and Seb.

The project involved meeting with WSDOT, Seattle DOT, Eco-Counter, Portland State University researchers, the City of Bellingham, and other groups to fully research the project. Our complete research and reasoning for our final locations and technology was helpful when we needed to pitch the project and already had the answers to the questions Western administrators asked. This process also allowed me to be introduced to the statewide planning team at WSDOT, where I was offered a position.

I wrote the SEJF grant abstract and completed the grant before graduating. The team received \$99,185 for three counters. Writing the grant was a great experience as was managing the team working on the project. It was fulfilling to have been able to present the project to the grant committee before leaving my position.

Other Duties:

In addition to my main projects this quarter, I worked on organizing Bike to Work and School Day, organizing Bike Month, projects with employees at Love to Ride, continued to run social media and outreach, and led a bike ride. I also ran the AS Transportation Advisory Committee, which funded a bike registration project and the ongoing costs associated with the micromobility project. Running this committee was another great learning experience, as I learned how to run an official committee and keep it functioning.

Assessment

This quarter is my final quarter working and attending school at Western. My position as the Active Transportation Coordinator has been an essential part of my education as a planner and professional and has been important to my personal development. Having the opportunity to work in my field while attending school has made me a much more well-rounded applicant

when applying for positions and has provided me connections that have made it easy to get my questions about the job search answered.

I feel that this position has been instrumental in preparing me to work in a full-time position. Watching my manager leave and seeing how an office continues to function with significantly fewer staff hours was a good learning experience. I was pushed to take on a lot more responsibilities than my role typically would due to this, which was challenging as a student not working 40 hours a week. I will be very aware of assuring staffing does not fall below where it needs to be, as it would have been easy to lose programs and required a lot more work to restart them if we had not hired before I left.

I have been a valued part of the Transportation Services team throughout the time that I have worked there and I feel it has been successful for myself and for the department. I have been able to learn while contributing greatly to the group and continuing existing programming while expanding programming to better serve students at Western. The projects I have led and participated in have largely been successful. I feel I could have performed better had my manager stayed or had the department hired for her position sooner than they had, as I was asked to take on more projects and greater roles within them while prioritizing my studies. I do not believe this impacted my studies, but my work could have been better had the department adequately prepared for my manager's unsurprising leave to work at a more planning focused institution, the Oregon Department of Transportation.