

2015 Masters Adams Award Winner:

1. Describe how you have contributed academically to transportation research, transportation writing and/or other educational activities related to transportation. (500 words or less).

My contributions to transportation research and writing are significant. I researched and co-wrote an article our Minnesota state speed limit laws that informed a report to the State legislature by the Commissioners of Health and Transportation. The Dimler Amendment exempts low-level speed violations from being recorded on a driver's records. While this law is popular with drivers, its original impetus no longer exists, and contributes to very negligible positive impacts on safety, or travel speed or reliability. I presented this research and our recommendations at MnDoT's 2014 Toward Zero Deaths Conference. I researched and am the lead author on an article to be published in the Minn. Journal of Law, Science, and Technology regarding how Minnesota can prepare its laws and policies for self-driving vehicles. This article is a response to a symposium on autonomous vehicles hosted by the Humphrey School and the State and Local Policy Program. I will present this article at the CTS's 26th Annual Transportation Research Conference in May 2015. I assisted in the evaluation of a Dakota County Mobility Management Program. I am also conducting research about automated speed enforcement and the challenges and potential strategies for implementing this in Minnesota. Ideally this research will help policy-makers decide if automated speed enforcement is even possible in Minnesota, and potential legal, policy, financial, and other methods for implementing the technology.

My educational experience has been purposely tailored to address the important nexus between the environment, urban and rural planning, and transportation systems. I have taken several courses on transportation, including courses from Professors Jason Cao and David Levinson. I focused my research for course assignments on equity in transportation, particularly in investment and funding for transit systems. I am currently taking a capstone course at the Law School targeting transportation and energy related projects, including capping freeways in the Twin Cities Metro; developing strong, objective metric for equity in Metropolitan Council projects; and assisting rural Alaskan communities transition from fossil fuel dependence to clean, renewable energy sources. I am a member of the Interdisciplinary Transportation Student Organization, and regularly attend —Friday Trans Talks. I am the President of the Humphrey School's Planning Student Organization and regularly connect all Humphrey students with ITSO and other transportation activities. In particular, the Planning Student Organization hosted a —Transit Training event this past fall, in order to teach incoming students about the local transit systems. We also host semi-annual events that focus on a particular form of transit, for instance a restaurant —crawl along the METRO Green Line soon after its grand opening.

2. Explain how your experiences in transportation make you a good candidate for this award (500 words or less).

I believe I am a strong candidate for this position for several reasons. Among those reasons, four are particularly prominent: (1) I have a strong background and experience in public interest-focused policies and programs (2) I have focused my most recent scholarship and academic work on local issues, and (3) I have a passion for designing better policies for low-income and vulnerable populations.

First, I have a strong foundation in attempting to improve outcomes for my community and nation by creating and improving legal, policy, and planning systems. This strong personal interest is the reason I enrolled in law and graduate school, and is the foundation of my career aspirations. My commitment to advocating for the public interest in transportation related matters is reflected in my legal and planning coursework, and complemented by my professional experiences working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The Nature Conservancy, and the State and Local Policy Program. My dedication to public service is illustrated by numerous experiences, including volunteering for the National Ability Center, and counseling at-risk adolescents. My desire to improve my community continues to inspire me, and remains prominent in my conception of my role as a future attorney and planner.

Second, I focused my recent professional experiences and scholarship on efforts that will achieve a lasting local impact. Whether it be ensuring existing policy regarding speed limit enforcement, adoption of technology, or volunteering as a Board Member of a local charter school, I actively seek out opportunities to engage with and positively impact my community. For instance, I worked with the City of Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development to foster public participation in planning events surrounding the Gateway Corridor. This is a Bus Rapid Transit project designed to improve local economies, reduce traffic congestion and related pollution, and provide more transportation opportunities for several communities. My efforts, including concerted efforts to address environmental justice issues, helped increase awareness within communities impacted by the projects, and also helped concerned citizens have their voices heard in the planning process.

Third, I am constantly inspired to address social, political, and educational inequities. I have long believed that I have been blessed with myriad opportunities and advantages. Because of this, I believe I have a responsibility to pay this good fortune forward to my community. Whether it be working with at-risk youth, volunteering at the Cedar Riverside Community School, or developing a feeding program for an impoverished school in Kenya with the Kenyan Urithi Education Fund, I take seriously my role in the community and believe strongly in everyone's ability to positively impact society.

In summary, I believe this Award would affirm my goals, and further inspire me to address inequities in our society.