

2007 MATC Internship Report

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During the end of last spring, I had no idea of what I was getting myself into for the summer months. I had just signed up to be a MATC intern with the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency. I was both nervous and excited to meet with my sponsor at the intern-sponsor introductory luncheon. However, once I met with him, all my nervousness went away and I could barely wait the few days to start my internship.

My first day of work did not start out as I thought it was going to be. My sponsor called me the previous week and asked me to go to a Bikeable Communities meeting with him first thing Monday morning. After that I went to meet the director of MAPA. This turned out to be very interesting because he is the husband of an old German teacher of mine and asked, "How's it going?" in German when I walked into his office.

After the first day, the next two weeks were full of getting to know the software and attending many meetings. These meetings were a good way for me to get to know the people around the office, as well as to get to know what MAPA does other than transportation planning.

When I wasn't at meetings, I was working on the Highway Performance Monitoring System, the Travel Time Report, or the Traffic Flow Map. The project that I spent the most time on was the travel times. I had to both write up a report of the previous year's data and results, and also had to collect data for the next one by driving routes in the Omaha metro during both AM and PM peak hours. For the report I had to analyze the data, make maps using GIS, and write the rough draft describing the methodology and results of the travel times.

The other project that I spent a good deal of time on was the Traffic Flow Map. Every two years MAPA produces a map of the Omaha metro with the volumes of all the major roads. My job was to enter the count data from different agencies into GIS so a map could be made. It sounds boring, but it was actually kind of interesting to see the volumes, and it was pretty complicated actually putting the count data and other data into GIS.

One thing that was fun to do was traffic forecast requests. I got to actually look up traffic volumes in the 2035 model, which is in TransCAD. This software is amazing in the fact that it has the entire Omaha metro in it with a few hundred Traffic Analysis Zones. It was fun to do because in the urban transportation planning course, we did small problems like this by hand in class. It was cool to see a network the size of Omaha in TransCAD.

Overall being at MAPA has been one fun week after another. Every meeting I went to and project I've worked on are things that I will never forget. The time with MAPA and the MATC internship have left me with the knowledge and experience that I need to be a successful engineer.