

Annaleigh Yahata Ekman: Taking on the World One City at a Time



Annaleigh Yahata Ekman (2019 WTS-LA Board of Directors Scholarship Recipient), Photos © John Livzey, 2019

“In my first year of my graduate program at UCLA’s Luskin School of Public Affairs, I studied the theories behind Southern California’s declining transit use, labor and accessibility issues with transportation network companies, the absence of economic development around the Metro Blue Line. Being back in academia, I marvel at the optimism and creativity of the minds that surround me and I am inspired to continue to study the effects of technological advancements on urban development and continue to believe that a graduate degree focused on Transportation Planning and Policy and Regional Economic Development will create opportunities for me to conduct research and intervene in the current discourse.”

UCLA master’s degree candidate Annaleigh Yahata Ekman is most serious. With an undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley, outstanding work experience including an internship at Metro, and a 3.88 GPA at UCLA, Annaleigh looks to deliver on these intense goals. And that makes her the perfect candidate to receive the 2019 \$5,000 WTS-LA Directors’ Scholarship. But she doesn’t stop there. “I am pursuing a Master of Urban and Regional Planning because of my curiosity to delve into the specifics of transportation as it relates to civil engineering, social equity, and public policy. As an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, the medley of city planning classes helped me understand the interconnected nature of planning subject matter...I look forward to bringing my creative perspective on relating to physical space to the hands-on learning in studios and research at UCLA to explore how new transportation innovation and policies will affect housing affordability, promote equitable access, and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions in California.”



Jenelle Saunders, WTS-LA Board Member (Berg & Associates), Annaleigh Yahata Ekman, and Heather Anderson, PE, WTS-LA Board Member (HNTB)

Her dynamic intellect, drive, and ambition have not gone unnoticed. According to Metro Highway Program Senior Director Carlos J. Montez, “She uses her excellent skills to deliver spectacular results in the role of assistant project manager...Annaleigh has extraordinary focus and a strategic way of thinking that is

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making her a standout member of the team. Whenever there are problems or flaws in the process, she showcases her superb analytical qualities and identifies the issue and deals with them before they can become too serious.”

UCLA Professor and Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies Director Evelyn Blumenberg agrees, “Ms. Yahata has outstanding academic and professional credentials...In addition to her studies, Ms. Yahata has engaged in numerous extracurricular activities. In the Winter, she was the teaching assistant for our Advanced GIS course. She currently serves as treasurer for the UCLA chapter of WTS. Finally, since April, Ms. Yahata has worked as a Highway Programs Intern at [Metro].”