

## Congratulations to Lilly Nie, 2020 WTS-LA Myra Frank Memorial Scholarship Winner



*Lilly Nie (WTS-LA Myra Frank Memorial Scholarship Recipient), 2020*

Lilly Nie, the 2020 WTS-LA \$10,000 Myra Frank Memorial Scholarship winner, uses her unique position as a master's degree candidate to explore the intersection of transportation and community advocacy so that she can use what she learns to make the world a better place. From urban planning theory to technology to her moral compass, Nie is making a very real difference already, and she's not even graduated yet. "During the seven months that I have interned with Mayor Garcetti's Mobility Innovation Team, I have listened to dozens of transportation technology startups pitch their innovations as the 'next solution' to perennial urban issues like congestion, unhealthy air quality, and poor accessibility."

"To be certain, the transportation technology space is dynamic and exciting—from autonomous vehicles to urban aerial mobility to e-scooters to sidewalk delivery robots, it is clear that municipal governments will have to evolve quickly to keep pace with the new cadres of mobility startups vying for use of the public right of way. As an aspiring transportation planner who is keenly interested in working in the public sector, I am passionate about how cities can leverage transportation technologies to ensure equitable outcomes for all residents (not just those who live in downtown LA or the westside beach communities, where startups, venture capital investment, and technology testing have traditionally congregated)." But that's only half of her writ. Nie is also passionate in the extreme about community advocacy.

A master's degree candidate in the University of Southern California's (USC) Sol Price School of Public Policy, Nie will receive her urban studies master's degree this May. And she's an exemplary student. Maintaining a 3.9 grade point average, Nie regularly makes Dean's List, earned a Dean's Merit Scholarship (2020-2021), is a USC Presidential Scholar, is the founder and president of Undergraduate Planning at USC, and was a co-chair of the Asian Pacific Islander Caucus. Her work, smarts, tenacity, and commitment to justice are most impressive. And it's not gone unnoticed.

"Lilly is exceptional," explains Julia Thayne, USC professor and leader in the mayor's Mobility Innovation office. "Through both her coursework and her internship, I have tested her skills on policy research, writing, social media, mapping, interviewing, stakeholder engagement, number crunching, and critical analysis. In each area, she has shown incredible prowess. As an example, the final essay she wrote for my Transportation and Technology course this past fall was the best in the class... Similarly, in conjunction with a community project I am running at the Mayor's Office, I had Lilly research demographic information, travel patterns, and other data about the community to create a report that would underlie the project as a whole. With little guidance, Lilly was able not to only find the relevant information, but also to

incorporate her own insights as to what challenges the community might be facing and what solutions might be appropriate to consider.”

“What might distinguish Lilly from other applicants most of all, though, is her quiet leadership style. It exemplifies her dedication to the public good—and candidly, to real equity—and is expressed through her readiness to raise her hand to lead a project, to think creatively about problem solving, and to make sure people are heard and listened to.”

Lilly Nie uses her unique position as a student to explore the nexus between transportation and community advocacy. And after she graduates in May, she’ll take that exploration to an entirely new and professional level.