

## Congratulations to Samikchhya Bhusal, 2020 WTS-LA Board of Directors/Sharon Yates Memorial Scholarship Winner



*Samikchhya Bhusal (2020 WTS-LA Board of Directors/Sharon Yates Memorial Scholarship Recipient), 2020*

Transportation is universal. Consequently, both the benefits and challenges its users face are also universal. 2020 WTS-LA \$5,000 WTS-LA Board of Directors/Sharon Yates Memorial Scholarship Winner Samikchhya (Sami) Bhusal knows that viscerally. Originally from Kathmandu, Nepal, her experience with inequities and safety on transit in Kathmandu drove her desire to pursue a transportation career and effect change.

“Relying on public buses throughout my teenage years in the streets of Kathmandu, Nepal, I learned firsthand about safety concerns that transit holds for women. The neglect of women’s travel needs in transportation planning shaped my interest in transportation equity. Through my research on gender-sensitive transportation, I started learning about mobility injustices experienced by low-income communities of color. My long-term goal is to address the mobility needs of marginalized groups, including women, the elderly, riders with disabilities, communities of color, and low-income riders.”

Looking to advance mobility justice by working with community-based organizations, Bhusal wants to upend transportation planning that prioritizes buses, trains, and bike lanes over people. And she wrote an undergraduate thesis on the subject titled, *A Critical Review of the Comprehensive Transportation Study of Hyderabad Metropolitan Area*, where she focused on the disjuncture between the rhetoric of sustainable transportation planning and the realities of the discipline. She presented her findings at the Transportation Research Board Women and Gender in Transportation Committee’s 6th International Conference on Women’s Issues in Transportation in 2019. Through a book chapter she co-authored, and additional research, Bhusal’s conviction for justice has only deepened.

“Today, I am still curious yet frustrated by this question: Why are community voices silenced in decision-making about transportation? I am working on not only addressing this research questions, but also identifying solutions to counter dominant transportation planning practices.”

A master’s degree candidate in Urban and Regional Planning—with a concentration in Transportation Policy and Planning—at UCLA’s Luskin School of Public Affairs, Bhusal maintains a 3.95 grade point average and will graduate in June. She’s a member of the WTS student chapter at UCLA and the Planners of Color for Social Equity at UCLA. And both her abilities and her drive have attracted notice.

“Sami is dedicated to advancing transportation for those who need it and this drive motivates her to excel and learn,” explains Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies Deputy Director Madeline Brozen. “...But Sami stands out for the way in which she is working to advance this issue through an intersectional approach. She combines the knowledge of community development and organizing, critical race studies, and transportation to pursue better opportunities for people and justice in our society.”

Her supervisor at the Lewis Center, Brozen adds, “Through her work at the [the center] in our access to opportunity initiatives, she is already helping to advance mobility justice. In this role, Sami has reviewed and summarized a body of UCLA research to date on the role of inequities in transportation and how different aspects shape transportation access. In a very polite and respectful way, Sami is helping us to recognize what this body of work at UCLA has left out over time. Further, she has highlighted how we, as an academic community, have not focused on race explicitly, even as we have discussed that race and ethnicity shape travel behavior...she embodies a justice-oriented transportation professional.”

Transportation is universal, both its benefits and challenges. Learning that firsthand at a very young age, Sami Bhusal looks to spend her career trying to enhance those benefits and overcome the challenges, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.