

What I Did During My MATC Internship

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As the spring semester came to a close at UNO, I began to wonder what my MATC internship with the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency would be like. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but was excited to get real world experience and learn new things outside of the classroom. Thanks to MATC and MAPA this experience was both possible and rewarding.

On the first day of my internship I expected to go through the normal routine for any new job. I anticipated learning the tutorial for the software I would be using for the next 13 weeks and filling out the necessary paperwork. All of this took place as predicted. However, the second day was completely and pleasantly unexpected as I was able to travel to Lincoln to take part in the Nebraska Strategic Highway Safety Plan conference. As the summer went by, I learned many different things and was able to attend several meetings and conferences, including important meetings about the Council Bluffs Interstate and Pedestrian Bridge Project over the Missouri River. Also, I was able to attend other low-profile scheduled meetings at the MAPA offices which brought together all of the jurisdictions to solve the area's planning problems and to talk about the future. My MATC internship gave me an opportunity to experience real life applications

of the knowledge I am gaining in the classroom, as well as, begin to understand the complex process that is involved with each and every project.

I was able to participate in plenty of different projects throughout the duration of my internship. The main project that I was accountable for was the Travel Time study. In this study I drove during the AM and PM peak hours recording important data, including speed, latitude, longitude, and time, using a laptop and a GPS unit. Then, I took the data and converted it to units that made sense. I was then able to calculate the travel times for each segment of the 44 different predetermined routes. I was even able to prepare the topic outline for the final report. This project showed me the complexity of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro Area road grid and gave me a better understanding of the transportation system in the area.

One other major project I worked on was given to me within the first four hours of my arrival. It was the Highway Performance Monitoring System project that is done every year by MAPA in Douglas and Sarpy counties for the Nebraska Department of Roads. This project involved me going out into the field and updating important statistics that the Federal government uses to analyze the nation's infrastructure. Knowing that what I was doing would eventually end up in a report to Congress gave me a sense of importance and helped me learn that each job, no matter how small it seemed is important to the overall scope of things.

My MATC internship was an excellent experience and one that I will not soon forget. MAPA was a great agency to work for and I learned more than I ever

would have imagined. Now, when I go back to UNO in the fall I will have a greater knowledge of engineering and how everything we are being taught in the classroom relates to what actually occurs in engineering agencies and firms across the nation.

