

2014

# My MATC Internship

City of Lincoln

Sadie Erdmann

Sadie F. Erdmann  
City of Lincoln  
8/1/2014



The spring semester of this past school year was when I really started to seriously look for internships in the field I was studying. I was a sophomore at the time, majoring in Civil Engineering and I definitely was not one of those people who had a plan and knew exactly where my life was headed, in fact, I was pretty much a mess. I was behind the ball on the internship hunt, struggling through classes, and freaked out about having no idea as to what I would be doing as soon as the dreaded final exams were finished.

I have never been completely sure that I made the right choice by deciding to study Civil Engineering and that was mostly due to the fact that I had absolutely no real hands-on experience in this area. That is all I was really looking for honestly, was to gain experience. This is why I was so desperate to find an internship, because it would give me exactly what I was looking for; experience and insight into the field that I was studying so hard to go into. Finally I got this miraculous email from the Mid- American Transportation Center. A few weeks after that email I had an internship at the City of Lincoln and I owe it all to MATC. It is exactly what I wanted and needed and the relief I felt was off the charts. I honestly can't put into words the gratitude I feel toward the MATC program and the City of Lincoln for giving me a chance and allowing me to take this opportunity.

I work in the Public Works department at the City of Lincoln as a Construction Inspector. Our department inspects roadwork and sidewalks within Lincoln's city limits. The most basic description of an inspector's job would be to watch and check up on work to ensure things get done correctly and are up to standards. The inspector has the ability and right to reject unsatisfactory work throughout the project, and they also have the final say in many matters involving the construction process. Of course since I am only of intern status, I don't usually

have the final say when it comes to projects; however, I still love the fact that I get to be a part of the process and see all the different things it takes to actually complete a project.

This internship experience has been completely eye opening for me. I have realized just how much work it takes to finish some of these tasks. For instance, I got the plans for a storm drainage project early in the summer. I looked the plans over and saw that the project location spanned the length of only three city blocks and I immediately assumed that it would be a simple and quick project. I had never seen or been around anything dealing with storm drainage so I had no idea what to expect, but I didn't think it could possibly be that difficult if it only included three blocks. Oh boy, was I wrong on that one.

The entire purpose of this job was to replace the existing drainage pipe located beneath the roadway with a larger pipe to reduce flooding that occurred regularly in the area. There were so many steps involved in the process, many of which that I would have never even thought of. This project was located in a residential area, which required them to do small sections at a time so as to not have too much of the roadway disturbed for a long period. They had to tear up the roadway, dig to the correct depth, remove the existing pipe, lift in the new pipe, and finally backfill and compact the area so its surface could be driven on before moving to the next adjacent section. The use of heavy machinery was needed for this job and like I mentioned before, all of this work was being done along crowded residential streets. So as you can imagine, it was difficult to maneuver some of this large bulky equipment, but it was amazing how careful and skilled the machine operators were while working in these areas. With this particular project as well as some of the others I have worked on this summer, I have gained so much respect for the entire transportation industry. If I'm being honest, I was one of those people that got really frustrated with all the roadwork making my drive inconvenient at times. But now I realize that

they have to try to cram a ton of work into a few months when the weather is prime. Also, they work really hard to get the job done while trying to make it as convenient as possible for the public; and in the end they make improvements to the roads and sidewalks which in one way or another benefits everyone.

This internship has benefitted me in so many incredible ways. I have met an insane amount of amazing people and made great connections with many of them. I have gained new skills and come to many realizations this summer, but most importantly I have learned things about myself and figured out a little more about where I want to go in life. I'm not going to pretend like I have all the answers now, but will say that I feel much more comfortable with where I am now and where I am headed in the future.