

COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Active Transportaion Coordinator, WWU

Student Name: James Detke

Internship Dates: 1/4/2022 - 3/18/2022

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STUDENT SIGNATURE *James Detke*

DATE: 4/8/2022

Transportation Internship
Transportation Services WWU
Bellingham, Washington

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College of the Environment

Urban and Environmental Planning & Policy

Western Washington University

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Introduction

Since spring of 2021, I have worked for Western's Transportation Services department as the Active Transportation Coordinator. In this position, I am lucky enough to work on projects which interest me and develop what exactly I want this job to be. As an Urban Planning major with minors in GIS and Sustainable Design, I have been most interested in managing and developing the Starlight Shuttle, graphic design projects, and GIS solutions for transportation on campus.

Graphic Design

Graphic design has become a prominent part of my job as we have developed the Starlight Shuttle system, expanded student bus access to include Skagit Transit, and expanded our social media presence. Through this position, I have greatly improved my Adobe Illustrator skills, which has been one of my goals in working while attending school. I am hoping to graduate with a Sustainable Design Minor and a set of skills to apply to any design work I can be involved with in the Urban Planning realm.

The largest graphic design project I have worked on is the Starlight Shuttle posters, which I began in fall quarter. In recreating the late night shuttle service and working to modernize it to better compete with options such as Uber or Lyft, we have worked to rebrand our service. We have an arrangement with Whatcom Transportation Authority to allow advertising at around 30 bus stops around Western's campus. The posters I created have been put up at these locations. Despite the relatively straightforward goal of creating posters, this process took much longer than I expected. Other coworkers and collaborators had inputs throughout the process and my conception of what the poster should communicate shifted while making it. I developed a more straightforward poster with less unnecessary information and worked with Jillian and our team to make it as easy as possible to understand. These posters were developed alongside the vehicle graphics and logos so that they would appear as a unified brand with the aid of University graphic designers input.

I also developed media for advertising Western's partnership with Skagit Transit. Over the past few years, Transportation Services has collaborated with them to bring a system to allow students to ride all Skagit Transit services free. Not only does this make university more affordable for students in Skagit County, but allows students from Seattle to get to Everett free of charge. One of our main focuses is to make non-car options the easier and more affordable option for students to reduce the number of students reliant on vehicles. Many students on campus own cars specifically to get home to the greater Seattle area, so this program will hopefully reduce cars brought to campus and Bellingham.

While I enjoy graphic design and design in general, I do not plan on becoming a graphic designer as a main aspect of my career. I believe graphic communication is important in almost any field and it is certainly important to learn the language to communicate about graphic design. I have worked with Chris Baker and the Publicity Center on campus in this position as well to develop publicity materials for our services. This experience will help prepare me for almost any field I end up in, even if I am not the one creating graphics.

Starlight Shuttle

The Starlight Shuttle began service in Fall of 2021, making a new service that we are still working on. I have been involved in working towards improving it, which has involved communications with drivers, LAZ Parking who we contracted the service to, and TransLoc who develops the apps we use to interface with drivers and riders. In February, I did a ride along with a driver for the first three hours of service, the time it is most active. I was able to find specific issues with both the driver and rider app and recommend changes to improve them. Small changes, such as requiring a pop up for riders to input the total number of riders for the trip, make it much easier for the driver and software to know what to expect and be more efficient. I feel much more prepared to work in a transportation setting where on demand service is offered, as I know which apps, companies, specific features, and what types of problems are likely to come up. Running the late night shuttle as an on-demand service has been a pilot program that we may or may not be able to continue due to increasing ridership as more students want to go places at night.

Initially, it was challenging to get the word out to students that this service was being offered. As it has developed, it has been challenging to maintain the same level of service. Especially with riders who are often intoxicated picking up and dropping off students takes more time than expected. The system gives inaccurate timelines for when the shuttle will arrive and when riders will be at their final destination, which has been hard to adjust due to a lack of communication from the TransLoc develops and due their lack of experience in operating and creating software with college students in mind.

GIS

One of my background projects when I am not working on time sensitive projects is developing a GIS solution to counting and creating data on bike parking for Western's campus. Over winter quarter, I have had time to begin exploring ESRI's Field Maps app and learning the ways to connect data collected on mobile devices with spreadsheets. I have so far been unable to create an easy and seamless solution to counting bikes on campus, but have developed a draft map and data collection system for Western. I hope to continue improving it for use next school year. Currently, users can record data on the number and type of bikes at each bike rack on campus along with the date and an option to include notes. This data is stored in a single spreadsheet for all bike racks. For this to be more effective, I am working on a better way to label and record which data input corresponds to each bike rack. The current Field Maps app seems to be developed for very simple point, line, or polygon data collection at one point or ongoing intensive data collection for inspecting transformers, fire hydrants, or other more complicated infrastructure. Adapting this app to fit the needs of Transportation Services has been a challenge, but has allowed a great learning opportunity of a real world application for data collection and mapping. I have been working with Tyson Waldo, an instructor at Western, who has helped me when I come to an impasse and has helped me link course concepts with my work.

Despite the complexity of data collection, I was able to update the out of date data on bike infrastructure on campus and prepared this for redeveloping a university bike map. Over spring and summer, Jillian and I will be working with Stefan Freelan to develop this bike map. Western has a set system of maps which has been developed by Stefan, meaning that he is the

one who creates maps on campus. I look forward to collaborating and developing a cohesive bike map that will be part of Western's map systems.

Conclusion

While I was able to further many of my educational goals and further develop my transportation planning and design skills, I was unable to meet my goal of completing the trip plans. In early spring quarter, we received support to send these out to employees emails and physical addresses, which will help in attaining our larger goals of transportation demand management for campus. I will continue to work on these over the summer with a more concrete plan of sending them out at the end of summer before fall quarter begins.

One main takeaway in working in this position was just how long things take to happen when there are multiple people involved and any amount of bureaucracy. It has given me an appreciation for developing efficient systems within an organization. The lack of efficiency in getting things done appears to be an issue throughout the university. This position has made me consider the many benefits and drawbacks of larger groups and committees making decisions. University life and education within the UPSD program did not fully prepare me for the realities of long time lines or teach tactics for creating more efficient processes for moving forward with projects and institutional changes. These seem like skills that may be better learned through experience within institutions and likely change between institutions, but it will be an essential part of my career no matter what aspect of planning I go into. Working within a university and with student governance certainly seems to be preparing me to work in the corporate and government worlds.

I look forward to another year in this position and have greatly appreciated the opportunity to work in a field related to my studies while at university. It has been wonderful to stay in the same position for a year now and I believe working for an extended period of time has allowed and will allow me to make connections and navigate the university in a way many student employees here do not get to experience.

Figure 1: Starlight Shuttle poster, located on bus stops around Western's campus.

STARLIGHT SHUTTLE

LATE-NIGHT SERVICE FOR WESTERN STUDENTS

CATCH A RIDE TO OR FROM ANYWHERE WITHIN
ABOUT FIVE MILES OF CAMPUS FREE OF CHARGE

MON - SAT 10:30 PM - 2:30 AM

SUN 9:00 PM - 2:00 AM

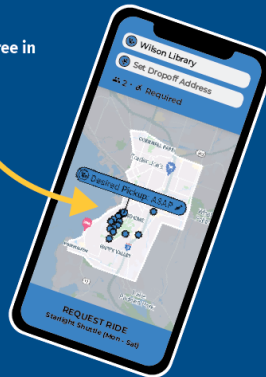


DOWNLOAD THE TRANSLOC APP & REQUEST A RIDE



transloc.com/app/

Ride for free in
this area!



RIDER INFORMATION

- Request a ride using the TransLoc app, by calling 206-638-7124, or going to ondemand.transloc.com
- For pickup, be in a visible location and show the driver your Western card
- Students may bring one guest. Indicate guest when booking
- Request ADA-compliant shuttle and bike rack when booking

SHUTTLE SERVICE

- The shuttle doesn't run during summer quarter and intersessions between breaks or on Thanksgiving day
- For updated information on service cancellations, check the TransLoc app, call 206-638-7124, or go to ondemand.transloc.com
- The shuttle is funded by the Alternative Transportation Fee



The Starlight Shuttle is not affiliated with WTA
Western is an equal opportunity institution



Figure 2: Skagit Transit poster, located at posting locations around campus and in Skagit County.

RIDE SKAGIT TRANSIT BUSES FREE OF CHARGE



Traveling to Seattle? Take Skagit Transit from Bellingham to Everett. Then, catch the bus from Everett to Seattle for less than \$5.



skagittransit.org

**WWU BUS PASSES CAN BE USED ON ALL
WTA AND SKAGIT TRANSIT BUSES**

For more information on regional transportation and getting to and from Western, visit transportation.wwu.edu



Figure 3: Bike Rack Map, small scale. Red points indicate uncovered rack and blue points indicate covered racks. Black squares indicate bike lockers. The audience of this map is internal Transportation Services employees and Stefan Freelan will develop a public-facing map.

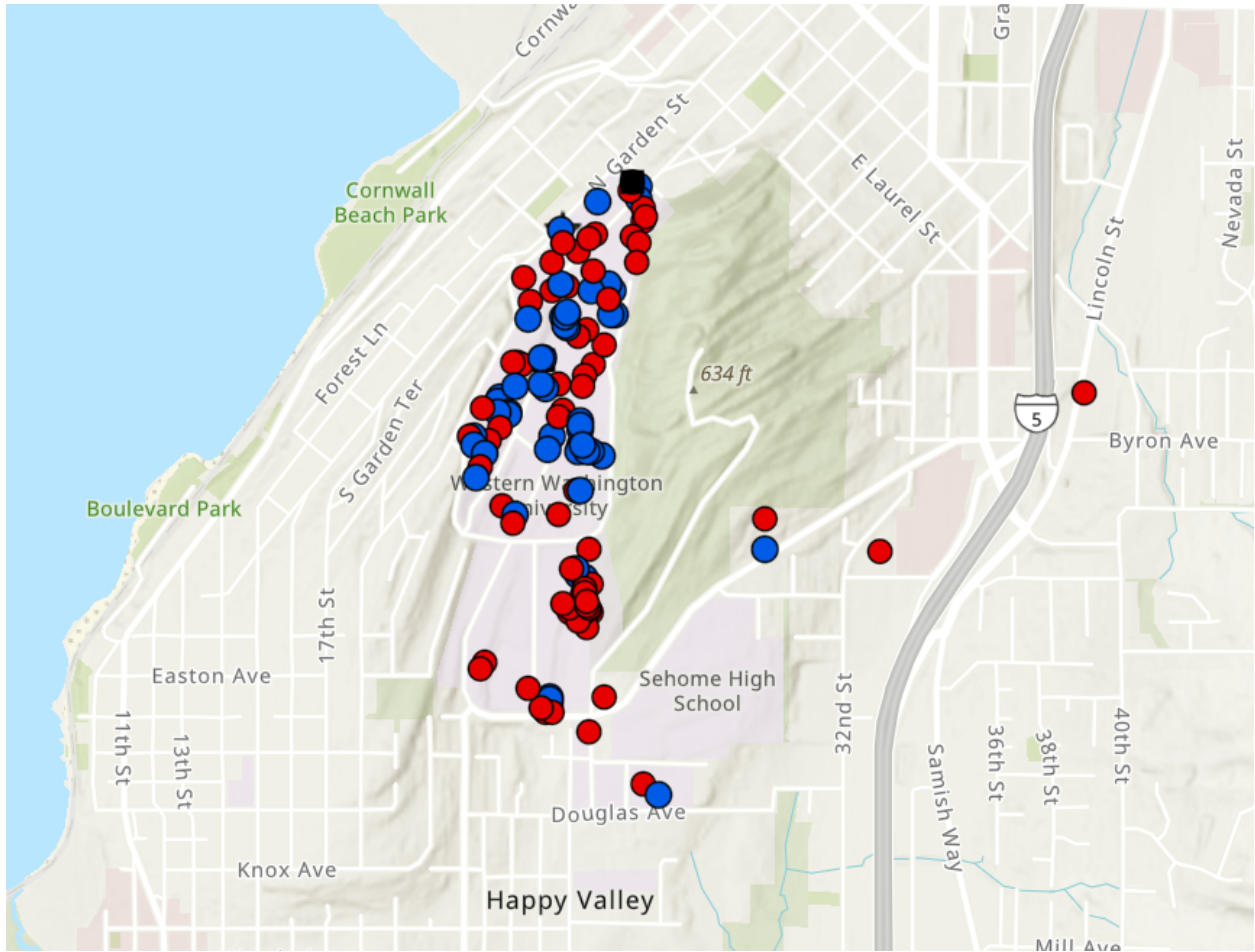


Figure 4: Field maps interface for data entry, also for employee use. Users can tap a point to add data.

