



American Planning Association
Making Great Communities Happen

WHAT IS... **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING?**

The American Planning Association is an organization of planners and those interested in planning.

APA defines the purposes of planning as:

1. Helping to create communities of lasting value
2. Offering better choices for where and how people work and live
3. Engaging citizens, businesses, and civic leaders to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, help planners, officials, and citizens by providing research, educational resources, practical advice and tools, and up-to-date information on planning.

How do people getting around? How fast are people getting to work? Are people reaching their destinations safely? How does food get to the grocery store? These are the questions a transportation planner asks every day.

While a transportation planner works with many types of transportation, he or she usually specializes in a certain kind, called a mode, of transportation. From cars and trains to bikes and planes, a transportation planner ensures people get around safely, move efficiently, and have choices for how to travel. Transportation planners even plan for the pedestrians using sidewalks and crosswalks. Many people use multiple modes in a single day, transferring from a bus to walking or from a car to a train. With so many different modes of travel out there, a transportation planner's job is a careful balancing act.

Planning for public transportation must take into account the number of people using buses, subways, and trains and at the same time manage the limited resources of transit agencies. Planners must also consider how various modes of transportation affect such things as the air we breathe, crowding on streets, and the safety of everyone using streets and highways. Since planners cannot ask each rider where exactly they want to go, they must estimate where people are, where they want to go, and at what times. Today this is done both with research and by asking people to voluntarily report their movements through apps. Many Americans use cars to get where they want to go and cars need lots of space to move around. The food we eat, the gas that powers our cars, and the clothes we wear are all delivered to the store or station by trucks. Transportation planners must plan for cars and trucks even when they are not moving! Just think about how many parking spaces or delivery zones along the street there are in your community.

Transportation planners plan for people to get around by foot, bike, or even unicycles! Planners must provide sidewalks wide enough for pedestrians and street cafes, and bike lanes located safely between the street and sidewalks. Even little things like the height of curbs, which can be important for a person using a cane, are important for transportation planners. Today, there are transportation planners who specialize in each mode and who make your daily trip easier.

MEET THE PLANNERS



CJ Bright is a transportation planner who works in cities all over the county.

1. What is a transportation planner?

A transportation planner is someone who designs mobility options to move goods and people.

2. What exactly does a transportation planner do?

A transportation planner works with various other people to determine the best methods to move goods and people. Sometimes I feel like an overlord of transportation because I get to choose how people move around! My main job is to design bus services to get people from point A to point B.

3. Why did you decide to be a transportation planner?

I've always been fascinated with transit. I grew up using transit and loved the idea of figuring out how people got from A to B or D to G. I love subways. I lived in NYC as a kid, lived in Boston for college, and now live in Chicago. Riding the subway has always been a part of my life.

4. What is craziest or funniest thing you've seen on the job?

A coworker and I had to create five separate "transit service planning option" plans for a large system over two days. Most plans take months to do, but we only had a few days. Also, we did not know how much money to spend since we did not have a budget!

5. How can a student get involved with transportation planning?

Some high schools provide internships to students. I would look at the options of interning at city hall or with the local transit agency.

Nate Evans is a bike and pedestrian planner for the Baltimore Department of Transportation.

1. What is a transportation planner?

A transportation planner is a catch-all term for a planner focusing on transportation issues—think of it as the mortar between the bricks of land planning. Transportation planners traditionally focus on cars but also work with public transit and freight, port, air, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic.

2. What exactly does a transportation planner do?

I focus on bicycle and pedestrian issues—planning bike routes, bike parking, bike events, and pedestrian and accessibility issues (making sure people can get places safely).

3. Why did you decide to be a transportation planner?

Combining my education in urban planning, professional experience in transportation engineering, and love of biking got me to the position I'm in now.

4. What is craziest or funniest thing you've seen, heard, or experienced on the job?

The craziest thing has to be the Kinetic Sculpture Race held the first Saturday of every May. I help promote this event that has oversized bike sculptures in a slow-motion race through the streets and harbor of Baltimore. A close second would be seeing a kid's bike locked to a bike rack on a field trip to D.C. Kind of heartwarming. The picture I took of it is now semi-famous.

5. How can a student get involved with transportation planning?

Volunteer! Aside from work experience, I found my volunteer experience with community efforts to be more walkable and bikeable helped me greatly. There is no shortage of local, state, and federal transportation projects that are looking for community input. Seek them out, open your eyes, and offer your two cents when needed.

For more information about planning for a youth audience, visit the American Planning Association's website at www.planning.org/kidsandcommunity and the *Kids' Planning Toolbox* blog at <http://blogs.planning.org/kids>.

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