

**TEN TIPS** is a new series from the APA Transportation Planning Division's Emerging Professionals Group. Each installment of the series includes tips from experienced transportation planning professionals aimed at helping students and new planners navigate the industry.

## Networking with Professionals

1. Join one professional association and be active (preferably APA!). **Join a division and chapter, volunteer to organize a program, and participate** in events. Just becoming a member adds little value, but being active introduces you to the established planners who are working in the field. When you do apply for a job, and they see your résumé, they'll already know your name. *David Fields, AICP, Principal, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates*
2. **Talk to people in related disciplines as well as your intended area of focus.** This helps broaden your understanding of planning as an industry and may introduce you to a great field you hadn't previously considered. *Catherine Duffy, AICP, Transportation Planner, Toole Design Group*
3. **Schedule a time to talk or meet informally (such as over coffee) for 30 min.** This can occur at a conference or on a regular day in the office. Come prepared with 2-3 questions you'd like answered. Questions should be oriented toward positioning yourself for success rather than a direct question about a specific job. Ask if you can follow up sometime and how best to stay connected. *Whit Blanton, FAICP, Executive Director, Pinellas Planning Council and Pinellas County MPO*
4. **Build skills in research, analyses, design, GIS, modeling, facilitation, and negotiation.** Persevere, be flexible, and take advantage of the network - you never know where or when the next opportunity will appear! *Hilary Perkins, AICP, Planner, City of Maryland Heights, MO*
5. We are in an industry founded on teamwork and interdependence among various agencies and interest groups. **Knowing your colleagues, elected officials, and constituents is critical to success,** and this is best achieved by networking in as many professional circles as possible. *Cathy LaFata, AICP CTP, Project Manager, HDR Engineering*
6. **Students and emerging transportation planners should attend as many conferences, lunch-n-learns, workshops and young professional events that their schedule will allow** and then introduce themselves to at least 3 people they do not know at each event. This does a couple things: it forces the person to meet someone new; it also gets that person interacting with peers in other areas of the field. Hopefully, providing a broader view of planning, but also make connections with others that may not have happened otherwise. *R. Todd Ashby, AICP, Executive Director, Des Moines Area MPO*
7. Transportation planners are typically a passionate group and love to engage in conversations about current transportation projects, theories, methods and ideas. **Don't be shy about approaching seasoned professionals with questions** or for clarification on issues, but be prepared that you may be in for a lengthy discussion when you do! *Shelby Powell, AICP, Deputy Director, NC Capital Area MPO*
8. **Make networking and attracting mentors part of your day-to-day work** - reserve time for it. Remember, mentors can vary a lot, from those giving kindly, supportive advice to someone telling you to get your act together. Both kinds have their place. *Richard Willson, FAICP, Professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Professor, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona*
9. **Networking is most effective with face to face, attentive contact.** Turn off your phone and put it out of sight. *Jo Laurie Penrose, AICP, Project Planner*
10. **Be prepared to offer a two way relationship.** Think about what skills or perspective you will bring to the interaction at the initial session and in an ongoing manner. *Gloria Jeff, AICP, Principal Planner, WAMPO*