

Excited, hopeful and motivated, I arrived in Berlin hungry for experience that would further my academic career. The Society for Urban Ecology and its trainee program helped me achieve this. During our first meeting at the Humboldt University, Professor Qureshi laid out the various options I had during my four-month internship in Berlin. I decided to conduct my own research project in a field most interesting to me: Urban Transportation.

After a few weeks of collecting background information and reviewing what my research options were, I decided to work on urban active transportation (walking and cycling), and methodologies for better understanding transportation mode choice. I studied the perceived and physical barriers to active transportation as a habitual means of getting around. The data collected in Birmingham, UK, included two parts: the first focused on the physical characteristics of the dense, low-income ward of Aston in Birmingham. This entailed collecting information on intersections, in order to construct an Intersection Quality Index, allowing to rate intersections on their design for safety and conduciveness to walking and cycling. The second part of the data focused on the perceived barriers to active transportation, or the opinions and recommendations on walking and cycling of those in the Aston Ward. This was achieved through in-person and online intercept surveys.

SURE and Professor Qureshi added to my academic background in spatial statistics, geography, urban field studies, surveying, and urban planning by providing me with key tools in planning research as well as useful connections throughout the internship. While collecting data in Birmingham, Professor Qureshi arranged a meeting with Professor Richard Coles at the Birmingham City University. The meeting with Professor Coles allowed me to gain constructive feedback on the methodologies and direction of my research. Working at the Humboldt University allowed me to collaborate with other students in domains I am less familiar with, like Geographic Information Systems, for example. Throughout the research process, Professor Qureshi and I worked together to frame my research with the ultimate goal of getting published in a research journal. This helped me better understand the processes and workings in the world of scientific publishing, and helped me understand the specific angles of research that the scientific and urban planning community may be interested in. Furthermore, although SURE and Professor Qureshi helped tremendously during the internship, my research and time management solely reflected my aspirations and goals. This led me to strengthen my work ethic, as well as boost my self-confidence in taking on academic challenges. The collaborative environment of the University also increased my knowledge in fields that I may otherwise not have been able to experience. Overall, being a trainee at SURE greatly advanced my academic career, and I am very grateful to have been a SURE trainee.