

TRANSPORTATION SPOTLIGHT



DONGMEI
“MAGGIE” LIN

COMPANY:

DKS Associates

TRAINING ORGANIZATION OR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY:

Beijing Jiaotong University, China (BS, PhD)

University of Nevada, Reno (MS)

CERTIFICATION/DEGREE(S):

PhD in Transportation Engineering

MS in Civil and

Environmental Engineering

BS in Management

Information Systems

memphis.edu/setwc



Q: How did you select your certification program or college major?

A: Coming from a different college system in China, I knew little about the majors when I chose the program before attending college. I was always passionate in solving problems and my interests in data analysis and computer technologies led me to Engineering. While studying Management Information Systems for my college degree, I was introduced to transportation in an elective course and developed a love for Intelligent Transportation Systems where I could apply my computer side of skills into the transportation field.

Q: What was the biggest influence in your selection of career pathway?

A: The feeling of accomplishments and satisfaction when I see my work from design through implementation in the field and making a meaningful difference in people's everyday life.

Q: What attracted you to the transportation industry?

A: I love finding solutions. The very first problem in college that introduced me to transportation was to reduce the time needed for left turn vehicles to cross a giant intersection. I enjoyed discussing with my team and trying out ideas. The more I get into transportation, the more challenges attract me in this industry. From a safe pedestrian crossing to a brand-new transit line, from a traffic signal to a regional transportation plan, from a bike rider to a driver, we change roles and face challenges in transportation every day. The ability to provide solutions to transportation problems, big or small, has been the biggest motivation that drives me forward in this industry.

Q: What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A: Diversity in roles and opportunities to grow. There is so much you can do in being a transportation engineer. You are always able to find a role that fits your personality and skills and you also have the flexibility to explore new things. You can be an analyst if you like numbers and data, a designer if you enjoy plan drawing, a planner if you like visioning, a presenter if you like speaking, a coordinator if you enjoy interacting with people, etc. Communications weren't my strength when I first studied engineering in college. Over the

years working with professors, public clients, and fellow consultants, I have grown from a problem solver on the technical side to a consultant that can present my ideas to different audience.



Q: How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

A: DKS is a transportation specialty firm that mostly serves public clients in providing professional services in transportation planning, design, engineering and smart mobility. We serve the communities by reaching out to the public to identify transportation-related issues, listening to their needs, serving all modes (not just vehicles), and using our specialties to provide solutions that benefit our communities in their best interests.

Q: What's the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your professional career?

A: I identify myself as a signal operations engineer at heart. The traffic lab at University of Nevada, Reno has signal controllers and almost everything you need to program a traffic signal. One of the most exciting projects that I have worked on was testing signal timing plans in the lab, evaluating the benefits and drawbacks, implementing the plans in the field, and driving through the roads with the signals that run *my* plans.

Q: What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

A: I've never been bored by my work and colleagues. I work with a team of talents that are all excited in facing the challenges we have and collaborating to make our society better. I am proud to tell people what positive changes we could make to our communities in transportation.

Q: If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college, what would it be?

A: I would take courses in public speaking and communications design. Engineers tend to be buried in the nitty-gritty of numbers and methodologies and neglect the importance of communications. You may be comfortable speaking in front of a room of engineers, but it would be a completely different experience when you have to explain your "perfect" ideas in a public meeting with people of all kinds of backgrounds. Communications design can help you best present your technical data to the right audience.

Q: What advice would you share with students or anyone considering your profession?

A: If you consider this profession, taking courses will give you knowledges, but getting internships will prepare you in landing a job. Get internships where you can, engineering firms, public works, or customer services. The more aspects you know about this industry, the clearer you will know how you will fit. Technical internships are helpful for understanding the industry, yet communication skills are really valuable for any profession. Any experience that helps interact with people can be beneficial. Transportation is an evolving industry. Keeping up with the rapid changes in technologies will benefit your career.