



Akanksha Balakumar

AITPM Young Professional Award Nomination 2023 NSW

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Ganesh Vengadasalam & Chris Roberts

NSW Branch President & Vice President

Australian Institute of Traffic Planning and Management (AITPM)

I am writing to formally apply for the prestigious AITPM Young Professionals Award. As a dedicated professional in the transport industry, I am eager to showcase my passion for pursuing a career in this field and my unwavering commitment to addressing pressing transport issues. I firmly believe that my achievements, interests, and contributions closely align with the assessment criteria, making me a strong contender for this esteemed accolade.

Interest and passion in transport planning: My interest in pursuing a career as a transport professional was ignited during the early stages of my academic journey. This interest has continued to grow throughout my undergraduate studies and professional experiences. I completed a bachelor's degree in urban planning at Macquarie University, where I immersed myself in transport-related coursework and research projects. This educational background has provided me with a solid foundation in transport planning, place-based planning, streetscape design, and sustainable mobility. To stay abreast of the latest developments in the field, I actively seek out professional development programs, attend conferences, and stay engaged with industry publications.

Notable achievements: During my undergraduate studies, my commitment to academic excellence was recognised through a scholarship awarded in recognition of my achievements. Furthermore, I was honoured to receive the distinction of being the "Most Commendable" student for my outstanding performance in planning. Building on these accomplishments, I've learned some aspects about how to optimise transport networks, but my real passion is for women's and girls' safety, and active and public transport, and I'm going to bring this passion to my work.

Efforts and involvement in advancing transport issues: Beyond my academic and professional pursuits, I consistently demonstrate my commitment to advancing transport issues within the community. As a dedicated transport planner, I actively engage in extracurricular activities that contribute to sustainable and equitable transport solutions. I collaborate closely with local government organisations to provide valuable insights and expertise in infrastructure planning, advising them on strategic considerations to achieve the best outcomes for our communities. Through thorough research, data analysis, and proposal recommendations, I aim to influence policy decisions and advocate for sustainable alternatives. I believe that by prioritising sustainability, accessibility, and inclusivity, we can create transport systems that cater to the needs of all individuals. Moreover, I actively raise awareness about the importance of women's and

children's safety in public and active transport services through workshops, project delivery, and educational initiatives. In addition, I seize opportunities to mentor and inspire young students, showcasing the value of involvement in the transport industry and the potential for creating better outcomes for our cities. By sharing my knowledge and experiences, I aim to encourage the next generation to actively engage in the transport sector and contribute to its development.

Benefits of attending the National Conference: Since my time at WSP, I have been actively engaged with AITPM, by attending various events, volunteering at the 2022 National Conference in Sydney, and building my network from these opportunities. In addition to this, I had such an incredible time learning from various speakers, and panellists along the themes of climate, communities, and inclusivity in the space of transport and human-centered design, specifically - 'Why walkable, bikeable cities are better for people – and our planet' and 'Policy Solutions and International Lessons for Reshaping Mobility for More Inclusive, Connected Communities' which further enhanced my passion for transport planning.

Participating in the 2023 National Conference would be an invaluable opportunity for me to enhance my skills and expand my professional network. I anticipate gaining insights from industry experts, deepening my understanding of emerging trends and best practices, and staying informed about the latest developments in the field. Through the exchange of ideas and experiences with fellow professionals, I aim to acquire fresh perspectives that will further enhance my ability to contribute to the transport industry by advocating for better streetscape outcomes to improve the liveability of communities, with a particular focus on vulnerable and lower socio-economic groups. Furthermore, I am committed to fostering young professionals within both AITPM and WSP by sharing my knowledge and experiences.

Involvement with AITPM and Young Professionals Committee: I am highly interested in engaging with other young professionals through the AITPM Young Professionals Committee and positively contributing to this industry and its future leaders. Recognising the power of collaboration and mentorship, I currently serve as the Regional Co-Lead (Sydney) for WSP's Emerging Professional Network. In this influential role, I have taken on significant responsibilities in driving young professional development within the industry, particularly for individuals with 0-10 years of experience. Through hosting a variety of large-scale events, I have successfully showcased the importance and value of the transport sector to both internal and external stakeholders. These initiatives have not only influenced people's perspectives but also encouraged business development and fostered a culture of continuous learning.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that my unwavering passion for pursuing a career in the transport industry, combined with my notable achievements, dedication to addressing transport issues, and commitment to enhancing women's and children's safety, make me a strong candidate for the Young Professionals Award. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be considered for this esteemed accolade and would be truly honoured to receive such recognition.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of my application.

Akanksha Balakumar - Graduate Transport Planner, WSP Australia

