

New ITDP Leadership Embraces Old Values and New Opportunities



By Heather Thompson,
ITDP CEO

The staff and board of ITDP are proud to introduce our new CEO Heather Thompson. Ms. Thompson officially stepped into the role in October, having previously served as Interim CEO, and as ITDP Board President.



Photos: ITDP

This is an exhilarating time to be taking on a leadership position in the transport field. Although polluting internal combustion engines continue to flood our streets, there is much reason for optimism. Promising technologies offer us new ways to create better streets, better cities, and better lives. From the potential of electric buses, bikes, and scooters, to daily innovations of smartphone enabled information systems and the power of big data, to new platforms for shared vehicles – technology is a tool that we can wield to make the booming cities of the future more livable, equitable, and sustainable.

I grew up in Los Angeles, California, enjoying the beautiful beaches, hillsides, and great diversity of people and culture that LA has to offer. I also saw that beautiful land given to more and wider roads, with the forever unfulfilled promise of reducing traffic congestion. Without alternatives to cars, people lose hours in traffic each day, greenhouse gas emissions seep into the skies, air pollution is consistently ranked as the worst in the nation, and money pours into the bottomless pit of the gas tank. My later experiences living in York, England; Copenhagen, Denmark; and Guangzhou, China opened my eyes to the benefits of cities built around public transit, as well as the epic scale of an emerging nation's development boom.

I am proud to now find myself at the helm of ITDP, an organization with a long history of helping cities worldwide avoid the pitfalls that plague Los Angeles and other car-oriented cities. I am fortunate to be able to build on the great work of my predecessors: our visionary founder Michael Repogle, who played a huge role in mainstreaming sustainable transport as key to development, longtime CEO Walter Hook who led ITDP to fulfill our mission of building a gold standard Bus Rapid Transit system on every continent, and CEO Clayton Lane who helped us become more collaborative and build new partnerships. A big thank you to the donors who have supported ITDP for years, helping to make this great organization what it is today.

ITDP's future is in embracing new opportunities, while remaining true to our values. Our mission to provide accessible, equitable mass transit is more important than ever. The solutions of the future must build upon, rather than detract from, quality public transport that serves everyone, especially women, young children, and the elderly, who are the majority of transit users. As we have done for more than three decades, ITDP will continue to bring new, tangible solutions to cities worldwide, and will help cities learn from and inspire one another to build a different, brighter future.