

2024 ITE Council Impact Award Nomination

Career Connect with Kate

ITE Canada is proud to nominate the **Career Connect with Kate** initiative for a 2024 ITE Council Impact Award. This innovative initiative, led by **Kate Whitfield**, epitomizes outstanding contributions to the transportation community and demonstrates excellence in the following ITE core areas:

- Unique educational programming and resources for student and young member engagement
- Dedication and commitment to transportation in the community
- Demonstrated commitment to incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of transportation

What is Career Connect with Kate?

THE ORIGIN STORY | A transportation professional giving back

In the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kate Whitfield put out a call on LinkedIn offering to practice video interviews and provide resume feedback for individuals seeking work in transportation engineering and planning in Canada. As a longtime ITE member and volunteer with extensive experience in the field, Kate saw an opportunity to give back to the transportation community, particularly those newer to the industry. The ten 1-hour slots she offered filled up within a day and the appetite for more was clear.

GOALS & FORMAT | Scaling up with support from ITE Canada

Kate approached the ITE Canada Executive Committee with the idea for a formal initiative: to host engaging virtual networking conversations to support our younger members in their journey into the transportation profession. *Career Connect with Kate* launched with its first episode in August 2020 as a video series with the following goals:

- Remove barriers to employment in the transportation profession
- Paint a picture of what different types of jobs in transportation look like
- Provide practical tips to help job seekers
- Offer a platform for networking to help people connect virtually at a time when in-person events were not available

Since that first episode, Kate has coordinated and hosted 18 virtual conversations (17 episodes plus a follow-up conversation with a past participant) which can all be found in [this playlist](#) on ITE Canada's YouTube Channel (youtube.com/@itecanada). The majority of the episodes feature three job seekers and three people currently employed in Canada's transportation industry in a facilitated conversation usually centred around a theme such as software or how to talk to people at conferences. There have also been several special format episodes, often based on suggestions or requests from viewers:

- Episode hosted by a job seeker on how to get the most out of ITE membership
- Interview with a former participant sharing specific tips after a successful job search
- Episode featuring all young professionals with 2-3 years of experience
- Episode on different career paths for people with PhDs
- Episode on co-op programs and internships with perspectives from those hiring, students who participated, and academic support
- Episode featuring several members of the Active Transportation section from a municipality to share insights from both sides of the hiring equation

In addition to the virtual episodes, Kate has also hosted in-person *Career Connect* panel discussions and sessions at two (soon to be three) ITE Canada Annual Conferences and four ITE Student Chapters:

- **University of New Brunswick** - October 2022
- **McMaster University** - March 2023 (joint event with ITE Hamilton Section)
- **University of Toronto** - January 2024 (hosted by Kate's colleagues Ezra Lipton and Isooda Niroomand due to illness)
- **Carleton University** - March 2024 (joint event with ITE National Capital Section)

Demonstrated Impact & Results

In the nearly four years since its conception, one thing is clear: *Career Connect with Kate* is having a real impact on many seeking to grow in the transportation field and providing a platform for people to connect through genuine conversations about the profession.

ENGAGEMENT | Successful Student & Young Member Programming

Extensive reach and real results

The 18 videos posted in the series so far continue to be a reliable resource for students, young professionals, and job seekers at any stage. They have garnered over 4,350 views as of March 2024 with an average of 250 per episode and the tally continues to climb.

4350+

Views on YouTube (and counting)

407+

Hours watched

Beyond the numbers, we hear regularly from both participants and viewers about the real positive impact that this initiative has on their job search, networking strategies, and overall personal growth. Kate often receives enthusiastic notes from past participants after they receive their first job offer following participation in an episode or viewers who share the value and lessons they learn. We've even heard from one graduate student who would regularly schedule viewings with his housemate, treating the episodes like homework. Here are just a few of the many words of encouragement and gratitude that have been shared over the years (edited for length):

I took a gander earlier today at your Career Connect series and will definitely continue to go through the videos. As an undergrad that's navigating the industry and still getting comfortable with putting myself out there, I really appreciate having the resources to be able to learn and gain insight from different professionals in the transportation industry. I also enjoy how each speaker tells about their experience - it makes the experience feel more personal and I almost felt like my camera was on in the video call too.

Hi Kate! I recently found out about CITE and I came across episode 9 of the career talk video. I found it to be really helpful and interesting. Being a job seeker in the industry of transportation helps immensely knowing that there is a group that holds events to help people find jobs in the right field! I just wanted to appreciate all of the efforts that you put into this. Thank you :)

I am really enjoying your content, I try to watch all 9 so I can get the most out of them. This was one of the eye-openers, helps a lot to see opinions from different people and different sides.

Good Evening Kate! I just watched "Career Connect with Kate" episode 17. There are many tips to take away. I'm really happy to learn many tips each time you put out a video and want to thank you for doing this for job aspirants in the planning field. Thank you so much, Kate! :)

Broadening engagement with an innovative format

While webinars, virtual meetings, and video are now an industry standard, it was still a relatively new format in 2020 when *Career Connect* was born. This initiative was the first video published on [ITE Canada's YouTube](#) channel which has since become home to 78 (and counting) videos from Canadian ITE Sections and special ITE Canada efforts. Kate's innovation showed us that there is an appetite for video-based content and communication among the transportation community and opened the door for new ideas such as [ITE Canada's virtual award ceremony in 2021](#) where Kate was recognized with the Outstanding Voluntary Contribution Award for *Career Connect*.

On our social media channels, *Career Connect with Kate* offers additional, unique, and valuable content for us to share and provides a new avenue to spark conversation and grow the community and followers on those platforms.

Whether it's people discovering ITE Canada through *Career Connect*, using social media to submit ideas, or sharing and commenting, this initiative has successfully broadened our reach and engagement, particularly with younger and student members.

DEDICATION & COMMITMENT | Opportunities for professionals to contribute

Making space for virtual contributions

Career Connect with Kate is the epitome of dedication and commitment to growing and adding value to the transportation community. While ITE Canada provides support with video editing, hosting, and distribution, Kate Whitfield develops the episode ideas, coordinates the participants, and hosts the conversations—all on a volunteer basis. Her approach is one of collaboration, approachability, and responding to needs and interests identified by the transportation community; for example, she is developing a future episode around planners as members of ITE.

**Virtual
Episodes**

87
Total Participants

48
Contributing professionals

Over 17 episodes, 48 working professionals were provided with a unique platform to give back to the community and this will surely grow. The virtual format also allows members to contribute from anywhere, providing new opportunities for those not in the urban centres of our vast country who normally cannot participate in Section events.

Supporting Sections & Student Chapters

As in-person events gradually returned, Kate saw the opportunity to take *Career Connect* on the road and has generously organized four in-person events in collaboration with four ITE Student Chapters and three Sections in addition to two sessions hosted at ITE Canada Annual Conferences.

**In-person
Events**

130+
Total Participants

25
Panelists

These events served as rich panel discussions about working in transportation and professional development and also became networking events hosted by the Sections and Student Chapters, enhancing their engagement efforts and providing opportunities for job seekers and younger members in those communities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION | Showcasing many perspectives

A safe and inclusive space

Career Connect with Kate is, at its core, built on the idea of inclusion and equity. Membership is not required to participate in the videos which has helped expand the audience and participation. By giving an equal platform to those newer to the industry alongside those with more experience, the format of these conversations naturally creates a space where many voices and perspectives from the transportation community can be heard.

The informal nature of the conversations also allows participants to freely ask questions that would normally not come to the fore, such as: *What do I say if I walk up to you at a conference? What do I do if I am an introvert? How do people manage to maintain relationships after the initial contact? What are*

appropriate ways to reach out? How do I deal with not having Canadian experience? How do I get my resume noticed? These are all important questions that can shape how a new member of the industry will approach their professional development and job-seeking efforts. *Career Connect* is an inclusive space for both participants and viewers and, with tangible and concrete tips on these topics, provides actionable advice and support for many often underrepresented groups.

Fostering a more diverse profession

By creating visibility for individuals who may not normally be front and centre, this initiative gives all transportation professionals—both current and potential—the chance to see themselves in their dream job, at their workplace of choice, or as part of an organization that is open to all. *Career Connect* is a safe space for many newcomers to Canada seeking to enter the industry. Many of the participants, both job seekers and those employed, highlight success stories and strategies for creating a more diverse and representative transportation profession.

The range of disciplines and industries represented in the participant roster showcases the diversity of this initiative, surely supported by Kate's experience as both a registered planner and professional engineer. Participants have come from many sectors—private, public, non-profit, academia, and industry—as well as many disciplines including engineering, planning, and urban design. Attention is also paid to geographic representation and balance among *Career Connect* participants, a top priority for ITE Canada given the size and diversity of our District.

While we cannot directly attribute new members to *Career Connect with Kate*, this initiative has without a doubt helped to generate interest in ITE membership and involvement and paint a picture of the organization as one that is for transportation professionals of all kinds.

Conclusion

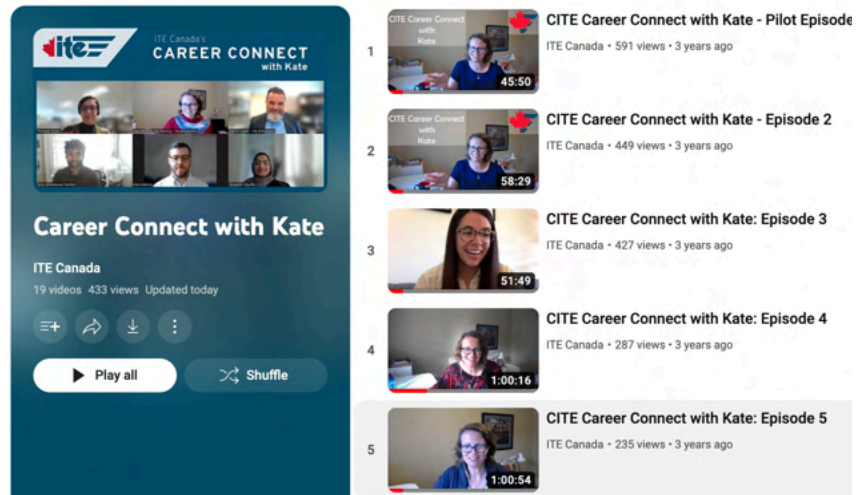
One could not offer a more deserving candidate for an ITE Council Impact Award. *Career Connect with Kate* demonstrates and fosters three of ITE's core values—**Community; Making a difference; and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**.

This long-lived and successful initiative is a unique innovation in educational programming and engagement for members (and soon-to-be members) at all stages of their careers, from students to young professionals to seasoned veterans. It showcases the commitment of Kate Whitfield, one of ITE's standout members, but also extends the opportunity for many individuals to offer their dedication and time to growing the profession. Finally, it epitomizes diversity, equity, and inclusion, concepts that are fundamental to the purpose, approach, and execution of *Career Connect with Kate*.

When we look at the actions identified in [ITE's 2024-2026 Strategic Plan](#) under the Membership pillar, *Career Connect* hits on every single strategy noted. By providing meaningful opportunities for members at all career stages—especially younger members, attracting members from a range of disciplines, and supporting Sections, Student Chapters, and the District, *Career Connect with Kate* is one of ITE Canada's most successful and impactful initiatives to date. We would be honoured to see this effort and Kate Whitfield recognized for their impact.

Snapshots of Career Connect with Kate

The **Career Connect with Kate YouTube Playlist** features 18 videos with over 4350+ views to date. The tips shared are timeless and people continue to revisit past episodes to gain insights and learn from peers and mentors.



In-person Career Connect offers a unique opportunity for knowledge sharing and networking at ITE Student Chapter and Sections events.



This screenshot from Episode 14 highlights a common occurrence during Career Connect recordings—a genuine laugh and moment of connection shared by the guests.

