

TTAP in Brief

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Traffic Calming Around Tribal Headquarters

Featuring the Shinnecock Indian Nation

There are many transportation safety issues posed by the location of the Shinnecock Indian Nation's tribal headquarters. The tribe's administrative offices, education centers, and health facilities are clustered on either side of a short stretch of highway. Drivers tend to go faster than they should, and there are no sidewalks or shoulders for pedestrians. To make matters worse, there is a sharp curve right before the community buildings that impedes drivers' line of sight, including those drivers exiting the parking lots on either side of the road.

"The people who work in these buildings, the tribal members using them, and the kids in our after-school program are all at risk when they cross the road," says Lauryn Randall, the tribe's transportation coordinator. "As a result, people often get in their cars to drive from one side of the street to the other."

Randall's challenge is to improve the safety in this area as well as its walkability. As a first step, she took on the problem that was easiest to fix: she had a road crew push back the vegetation on the blind curve by 20 feet. But without a transportation engineer on the tribal payroll, Randall was at a loss about how to address the technical aspects of traffic calming. She gave TTAP a call, which quickly connected her to Ed Demming, one of TTAP's safety experts.

Sharing Ideas and Expertise

"We're ready to provide assistance to tribes whatever their level of expertise," Demming says. "Lauryn and I worked back and forth on the phone and online. We discussed specific placement of traffic calming measures, and I shared relevant articles and information."

Regardless of a tribe's level of expertise, Demming always makes a practice of sending them to the FHWA's Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, also known as the MUTCD. "It's an intimidating book because of its size, but it is an excellent way to get grounded on the issues," he says. "It has all the information anyone could ever need on such topics as signing, striping, traffic signals, and pedestrian crossings."

All of the materials required for the project are readily available and inexpensive. This is often the case for low-cost safety projects. It is critical to keep the costs down when developing safety improvements with smaller tribes like the Shinnecock.



Tribal Technical Assistance Program



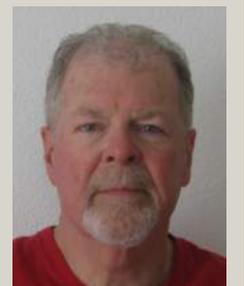
Existing Church Street showing sharp curve with limited sight distance and a lack of pavement markings, signing and shoulders. There is no safe place for pedestrians.

To provide traffic calming, Randall and Demming turned to a series of speed zones, crosswalks, and speed humps. Demming is a proponent of speed humps, the broader, less abrupt versions of the speed bumps that can often be found in parking lots. Speed humps are 3-4" high and are meant to reduce speeds to around 20 miles per hour without jolting drivers.

Randall plans to place a speed hump, with accompanying signage, right before the end of the curve, slowing drivers down in preparation for approaching a centrally located crosswalk. Randall is also collaborating with organizations lining the road to develop pathways that will help funnel pedestrians to the crosswalk.

She has secured a series of small grants from local and national organizations that will cover the cost of most of the elements in the design. "It's a lot of work," she says, "but I feel that I'm doing something helpful, and I'm learning a lot."

The Church Street improvement plan has been finalized. The locations of traffic control devices have been identified and implementation is expected to begin in the spring of 2020.



Ed Demming is one of TTAP's safety experts. Contact Ed at ed.ttap@virginia.edu for assistance with low-cost safety countermeasures or other safety questions.

Creating a Living Long-Range Transportation Plan

Featuring Crow Nation

The long-range transportation plan (LRTP) is the animating spirit of a tribe's transportation program. It is a visionary document that looks 20 years into the future, embodying a tribe's aspirations as well as the transportation system needed to support them. As TTAP planning and procurement expert Diann Wilson says, "Access to affordable and reliable roads is essential to a tribe's goals for employment, health care, and education."

The LRTP is also a practical document, detailing the series of priority projects that a tribe must complete if it is to reach its goals, with the steps needed to implement each project and the funding necessary to pay for it. It also provides context for these projects, by cataloging the strengths and weaknesses of the current transportation system and providing a socioeconomic profile of the tribal members who rely on it.

As tribal transportation planners well know, an LRTP is required by federal law as a prerequisite for accessing federal transportation funds for road construction, transit, and highway safety. All projects in a Tribal Transportation Improvement Program must first appear in the LRTP. At the same time, the LRTP also is the principal means for a tribe to assert ownership of the transportation planning process. In this regard, the LRTP is a living document, one that should change to reflect the evolving needs of the tribe.

Getting the Most Out of Your LRTP

All too often, however, tribes treat their LRTP as a one-time affair, allowing it to languish after extending the considerable time and effort needed to assemble it. This was the situation in 2017 when Laramie Plainfeather assumed the post of transportation planner for the Tribal Transportation Program for the Crow Nation. "Our LRTP had not been updated since it was written in 2006," he says. "One of the first things I did was write a new one. And even though I am now the program's asset manager, I have been updating it ever since."

As Plainfeather admits, there was a learning curve to writing a new LRTP. He and Wilson have a number of tips that might help make the task easier for other transportation planners:

- **Don't reinvent the wheel.** As Plainfeather notes, there are many good LRTPs available – from neighboring communities as well as other tribes – that planners can use as a source of ideas. "You can get a better idea of how you want to organize your LRTP and what information you want to include from seeing how other groups approach their LRTPs," he says. Plainfeather was inspired to insert a trail system in the Crow LRTP after reviewing the LRTP from neighboring Billings.
- **Make it a group project.** As a rule of thumb, Wilson says the more people who contribute to an LRTP, the more valuable it will be. "By collecting as many viewpoints as possible, you lessen the chances that you will miss something important," she says. "In addition, other people might be able to point you to sources of supporting information you can use to provide context for your projects."
- **Know how to use Word.** LRTPs are much longer than most documents a tribe produces – the Crow LRTP is more than 100 pages. If a tribe is writing their LRTP in-house, Wilson urges planners to take the time to learn such formatting techniques as creating page breaks, keeping headings with the following paragraphs, and creating a table of contents that automatically updates as you add or delete material. "Mastering some of the tricks in Word can save many hours of time," she says.



Crow Agency, Montana

Both Plainfeather and Wilson agree that keeping your LRTP current, once it is created, is extremely important, both for funding purposes and for ensuring the continuity of your transportation program. And as Plainfeather notes, "Updating your LRTP regularly is a lot less work than starting from scratch every 10 years."

TTAP Technical Assistance: A Customized Resource to Build the Skills of Your Transportation Workforce



The TTAP team of subject matter experts (SMEs) is a wonderful tribal resource, providing customized support to help build the technical knowledge and capabilities of tribal work forces. Serving as technical mentors, SMEs help with specific tribal questions. They provide guidance and resources for transportation workers to expand their skills and increase their capabilities to resolve future issues in-house.

Contact 833-484-9944 or info.ttap@virginia.edu to consult with a TTAP expert.

Road Safety Audit Translates into Funding Featuring the Pyramid Lake Paiutes

Transportation was not Sherry Ely-Mendes area of expertise when she joined the Transportation Planning Department of Nevada's Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. But the time she devoted to learning how to compile a road safety audit paid off in a big way. Ely-Mendes used the road safety audit she organized with the state's DOT to support a proposal for a multi-use paved pathway and crosswalk system in front of the elementary school in Wadsworth. "The kids were walking through the weeds and crossing at odd places across a busy state route," she said. "It really was a dangerous situation."

In July 2018, Ely-Mendes was notified that the FHWA was awarding the tribe a grant of \$500,000. With a matching grant from the Nevada DOT, Ely-Mendes had a \$1 million to devote to keep young children safe from passing traffic. "It just proved that you have to have documentation to make a convincing case."

Cooperating with the State

Securing that documentation took both good fortune and hard work. Ely-Mendes built a network of contacts in NDOT, attending a variety of training sessions and partnering with the state on a variety of transportation programs. "I am fortunate that the people at NDOT are sincerely committed to serving all the citizens of Nevada regardless of boundaries," she said. "They are always looking to cooperate."

A case in point, when Ely-Mendes expressed disappointment to her counterparts at NDOT that a grant proposal she had written to conduct a road safety audit on the three main state roads passing through the reservation was turned down, they volunteered not only to conduct it with her but also to fund it.

SNAP Training Addresses Urgent Need

As TTAP's Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention (MVIP) subject matter expert, Kelly Powell knows that seat belts and child restraint systems save lives when crashes happen. She also knows that Native Americans are less likely than other U.S. populations to buckle up and buckle in their children – a reality reflected in high rates of motor vehicle fatalities, especially among those aged 1 to 44.

That's why Safe Native American Passengers (SNAP) is an important core class in the MVIP curriculum. It provides basic child passenger safety training and uses new car seats, provided by TTAP, to allow students to practice installing the seats and using various types of seat belt systems. At the conclusion of SNAP classes, TTAP donates the car seats to the tribes or partner organizations to use as teaching tools or to distribute to families in need. As of August 2019, TTAP has donated 141 car seats at 27 different locations.

Making It a Joint Project

Conducting the road safety audits took time, requiring long days for each of the two shorter highways and a day and a half for the longer one – in addition to the days spent planning, coordinating schedules, and arranging logistics. The auditing team made a point of traveling the roads at night to make sure pavement markers and signs were suitably reflective and to identify places where additional nighttime safety measures would be worthwhile.

The state hired a firm of engineering safety experts to identify areas for improvement, document them, and compose the report. "Engaging those engineers was crucial," she said. "They knew how to state a problem – for instance, insufficient shoulder width – in language that funders understand." Ely-Mendes recruited members of the police department and emergency medical services as well as the tribe's maintenance department. "They are out there all the time," she says. "They know where the hotspots are."

Serving a Wider Purpose

This first road safety audit served a number of valuable purposes. It put the state in a position to prioritize road improvements on its roads running through the reservation and make a series of low-cost improvements. It also set the stage for the state and the tribe to cooperate on a subsequent audit of tribal roads.

It also helped stakeholders gain a better appreciation for the concerns their colleagues brought to the table. "Having traveled the roads together, our maintenance staff now has a better understanding of why filling a particular pothole on the way to the clinic is so important to our EMS people," she says. "And our EMS people came away with a sense of the workload that our maintenance team deals with each day. The road safety audit helped us gain a common awareness both of our safety needs and the resources we have to address them."

Powell, a certified National Child Passenger Safety technician and instructor, says there are several keys to increasing Native Americans' use of seat belts and car seats, including access to resources.

"The nearest store where you can buy a car seat may be two hours from the reservation," she said. "And it can be expensive. For families with more than one child, it's a financial burden." Yet many tribal communities do report high rates of car seat usage.



**Car Seat Safety Training
Oklahmoa City**

"Tribes that have robust child safety programs have higher usage rates. Education is a huge piece. Tribal ordinances and enforcement also affect usage," Powell said. "What we're trying to do is identify the problem and create a strategic plan to increase use of seat belts and car seats for each community."



TTAP Online Learning: A Free Resource to Extend Your Transportation Knowledge

TTAP online learning modules are a terrific resource to complement or extend classroom learning. Check out our 2-hour on-demand learning modules.

Asset and Data Management

Foundations for Using GIS
Introduction to GPS

Maintenance and Operations

Gravel Road Maintenance and Design
Erosion and Sediment Control
Pipe Installation and Maintenance

Safety

Crash Data Analysis
Improving Safety at Intersections
Low Cost Safety Improvements
Road Safety Assessments

Planning and Procurement

Developing Your TIP
Procurement 101
Project Prioritization
Single Audit

Project Delivery

Introduction to Construction Inspection
Emergency Relief Projects
Getting Your Project Started
Utility Coordination

Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention

Basic Child Passenger Safety Awareness

Find out more about online learning and register at ttap-center.org/online-training-schedule/.

SNAP continued from page 3

She also noted that many of the tribes with existing child safety programs have received assistance from the federal Indian Health Service (IHS) or tribal service providers, such as the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET). The agencies can play a role in both funding and education. For example, in June, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), IHS Nashville Area and USET co-hosted a joint meeting of more than 20 tribes ranging from Maine to Texas – including the newly federally recognized Virginia tribes.

While the meeting in Nashville covered many topics, TTAP was also invited to present SNAP training.

“Through this collaboration, we were able to reach multiple tribes with SNAP training, creating new relationships and lots of opportunities for technical assistance,” Powell said. “The Virginia tribes also attended the class, which is important because they are just getting started.”

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Overview

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Innovative Program Delivery's Center for Local Aid Support launched the Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) Center 2-year pilot project in 2018 as a transportation resource for tribal communities across the country.

The TTAP Center provides comprehensive transportation training, both in the classroom and online, as well as technical assistance to tribal communities. These activities help to build skills and expertise to ensure the safety and performance of tribal roads and the continuous professional development of tribal transportation workforces.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration



**Tribal Technical
Assistance Program**