

Planning, Policy  
& Programming

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**Project Title:**

Tribal Planning Needs Assessment –  
Phase 1

**Task Number:** 3508

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**Task Manager:**

Angela Fredericks  
Associate Transportation Planner  
angela.fredericks@dot.ca.gov

## Tribal Planning Needs Assessment – Phase 1: assessing the ability of 109 federally recognized Native American Tribes in California.

This study will assess current California tribal transportation plans and efforts, identifying opportunities and gaps in tribal transportation planning.

### WHAT WAS THE NEED?

The goal of this project was to identify transportation planning competencies, networks, and resources present in the 109 federally recognized Native American Tribes in California that the research Study Group comprises of, and in doing so identified their transportation planning capacity, documented any gaps in knowledge, and provided recommendations for additional aid as relevant. Transportation is more than just roads, and this study identified how transportation planning has been perceived by the Study Group. An important aspect of the study was to understand and define what transportation planning means to the Study Group, tribal understanding of Caltrans' mission and vision, capacity for participation in state, regional and local transportation planning and especially their understanding of and interest in transportation as a multi-modal system. The tribal transportation-related planning process for each tribe was an important variable to track and consider.

### WHAT WAS OUR GOAL?

The goal of this project was to identify statewide transportation planning needs and capacities of California tribes, and in doing so identify their planning capacity, document any gaps in knowledge, and provide recommendations for additional aid as relevant. Ultimately, these recommendations may lead to improvement of tribal participation and identification of transportation needs included within local, regional, and state planning processes.



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## WHAT DID WE DO?

Identification and definition of transportation planning capabilities, strengths, and challenges within tribes will require tailored research and documentation. As such, the ultimate objective of this project is to provide Caltrans with 1) a summary of contact information and current transportation planning staff/capacity for each of the 109 federally-recognized tribes in California; 2) guidelines and suggestions for incorporating tribal governments in the early stages of the planning process in a way that recognizes the unique governmental structure of sovereign tribal governments and differences in tribal government organizational capabilities; and 3) information about the presence of a Tribal Transportation Plan (including when it was done and updated; and persons responsible for it).

## WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

The researchers delivered a final outreach report, have made initial contacts with the tribes and transportation working groups, have submitted a draft database, a draft survey protocol and finalized a questionnaire for Tribes in coordination with Caltrans. Headquarters Native American Liaison Branch are taking a lead role coordinating with researchers on tribal communication efforts with Caltrans districts. Phase 2 of this research kicked-off in May, 2021.

## WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The pilot questionnaire was sent to 12 Tribes, and the responses received helped identify gaps and potentially insufficient data within tribal areas. Phase 2 of this study will include outreach and requests to all 109 federally recognized Tribes to help researchers provide specific recommendations for supporting and guiding tribal transportation planning needs, therefore benefiting these tribal communities in leveling their information gaps.

## IMAGES



Image 1: Pictured is a roundabout located at the intersection of State Route 89 and US 50 in Meyers, California. Meyers is home of the Washoe Tribe and this roundabout was installed to slow driving speeds and reduce pedestrian incidents.