



## OFFICE OF TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION TRAILBLAZER



*Road reconstruction made possible with a NSFLTP program grant. NPS Photo*

### Welcome from the Director

Greetings and welcome to the inaugural edition of the FHWA Office of Tribal Transportation's (OTT) newsletter - the OTT Trailblazer! We are proud to be able to provide this new form of outreach to our Tribal partners and stakeholders who work in Tribal transportation. Through this medium we want to share the latest information from OTT about the programs and services we provide.

I want to start with how our office has grown and changed to provide support for all FHWA activities affecting Tribal transportation. Since enactment of the Infrastructure

Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in November 2021, OTT staffing has increased to over 34 transportation professionals to administer the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP). They are working to provide support for direct funding agreements with 140 Federally-recognized Tribes, administer BIL discretionary grants awarded to Tribal recipients, deliver the Tribal Transportation Facility Bridge Program, the High Priority Projects, and the TTP set-aside programs for safety and planning.

Additionally, OTT has assumed administration of the important Tribal Technical Assistance Program. Our staff also provides transportation technical support to all Tribes participating in the DOT Tribal Self Governance Program. Finally, we have added a Consultative Planning position to advocate and ensure FHWA's Stewardship and Oversight obligations are being met such that States and MPOs are consulting and collaborating with Tribes in the transportation planning processes.

I am proud of the work of all of our staff who are committed to the OTT mission - *Through mutual respect and understanding, enhance the quality of life in Tribal communities by supporting the Tribes' delivery of transportation programs.*

I hope you find our quarterly newsletter informative and insightful to what's happening within the Office of Tribal Transportation.

- Erin Kenley, FHWA OTT Director

## Administrative Updates

- FY 2024 TTP Annual Reporting opens October 1 through December 31, 2024. The FHWA OTT will host three webinars. Save the dates below:
  - September 23, 2024 – 1:00 to 2:00 pm (EDT) - for the Central to Eastern Tribes
  - September 24, 2024 – 9:00 to 10:00 am (PDT) - for the Western Tribes
  - September 25, 2024 – 9:00 to 10 am (AKDT) - for the Alaska Tribes

If you have questions or need more information, please contact FHWA OTT Program Management Analyst, David Garcia at [d.l.garcia@dot.gov](mailto:d.l.garcia@dot.gov).

- Tribes with an FHWA Tribal Transportation Program Agreement are eligible to acquire excess and surplus Federal property. The OTT has established new procedures where surplus and excess government property can be transferred to Tribes to support delivery of activities under their FHWA Tribal Transportation Program Agreement.

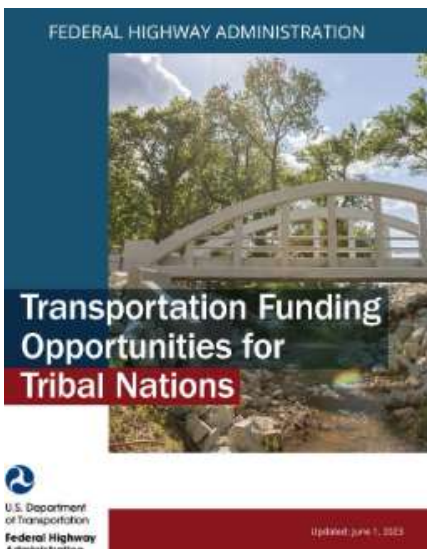
Learn more about the excess and surplus process [here](#) or by contacting FHWA OTT Financial Management Specialist, Doug Roberts, at [doug.roberts@dot.gov](mailto:doug.roberts@dot.gov).

- The [Tribal Transportation Program Delivery Guide](#) was updated in July 2024 and is intended to be a valuable resource for the administration of the Tribal Transportation Program, providing a source of technical transportation and program information.

## Funding Updates

Tribal governments are securing more discretionary grants in transportation. In FY 2020-2024, Tribes were awarded 109 USDOT discretionary grants totaling \$760.7 million. FHWA OTT has a new Discretionary Grants Management Team that provides project stewardship and oversight for all new Tribally-awarded discretionary grants.

- [FY 2025 Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund \(TTPSF\)](#)  
Prevent and reduce transportation-related injuries and fatalities on Tribal Lands. Applications for the 2025 TTP Safety Fund will be accepted October 1, 2024, through January 15, 2025. If you have questions, please email [TTPSF@dot.gov](mailto:TTPSF@dot.gov).
- [Tribal High Priority Projects \(HPP\) Program](#) provides grants to Indian Tribes or a governmental subdivision of an Indian Tribe whose annual allocation of funding received under the Tribal Transportation Program is insufficient to complete the highest priority project of the Tribe. Grants may also be awarded to any Tribe that experiences an emergency or disaster on a Tribal transportation facility that renders the facility impassible or unusable. Applications are accepted year-round or through January 31, 2025, for the current funding cycle. If you have questions, please email [blane.kunihisa@dot.gov](mailto:blane.kunihisa@dot.gov).



The [Transportation Funding Opportunities for Tribal Nations](#) is a document that provides information to Tribes on new and existing highway and bridge transportation funding programs for which Tribes are eligible. Federal funds are provided to Tribes within specific programs, and each program has its own eligibility criteria for allowable work.

The intent of this document is to help increase Tribes' awareness of available highway and bridge Federal funds and the associated eligibility criteria.

[Click here for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Competitive Grant Funding Matrix](#)

## Legislative Updates

[Tribal Transportation Facility Bridge Program](#) Final Rule effective August 12, 2024.

This final rule amends the existing Tribal Transportation Program Bridge Program, formerly known as the Indian Reservation Road (IRR) Bridge Program, by renaming it the Tribal Transportation Facility Bridge Program (TTFBP). It also removes references to terms such as structurally deficient, functionally obsolete, and sufficiency rating. These updates aligned the TTFBP terminology for bridge conditions with the terminology used for State departments of transportation (State DOT) in the Federal-aid highway program. This change established consistent terminology for classifying and referring to bridge conditions.

For more information, contact Russell Garcia, P.E., Federal Lands Highway Office of Tribal Transportation, Bridge Program Manager [Russell.Garcia@dot.gov](mailto:Russell.Garcia@dot.gov).

## OTT Staff Highlights

OTT is pleased to announce the selection of Rachel LeVee as the incoming Field Operations Manager in the Office of Tribal Transportation (OTT). As many of you know, Brian Allen retired in early 2024 after 35 years of public service.

Rachel has served as the Deputy Division Administrator in the Maine Division Office for the past two-and-a-half years. She also served for three years as the Field Operations Team Leader in the Ohio Division, and two years as an Area Engineer in the Mississippi Division. Prior to joining FHWA, Rachel served for 13 years as a Senior Project Manager and the Director of Transportation for a large Native American-owned engineering firm that specialized in serving Tribes. She also has nine years of experience working as a Project Engineer with the Utah and California Departments of Transportation. Rachel is a Registered Professional Engineer (PE) in California and is certified as a Project Management Professional (PMP).



*Rachel LeVee, personal image*



Danny Capri, personal image

Danny Capri serves as the OTT Discretionary Grants Management Team Lead, helping to oversee grant administration for all FHWA-administered grants awarded to Tribes. He previously served as a Tribal Coordinator, working with Tribes in the Alaska Region.

Danny has been with OTT for 10 years and with FHWA for 22 years. Danny's career includes experience in a variety of disciplines, including environmental compliance, planning, programming, and construction. Danny resides in Portland, Oregon and when not transporting and coaching two sons for various sports, he loves to spend as much time outdoors as possible.

[Click here to see additional FHWA Office of Tribal Transportation Contact Info.](#)

## TTAP Updates

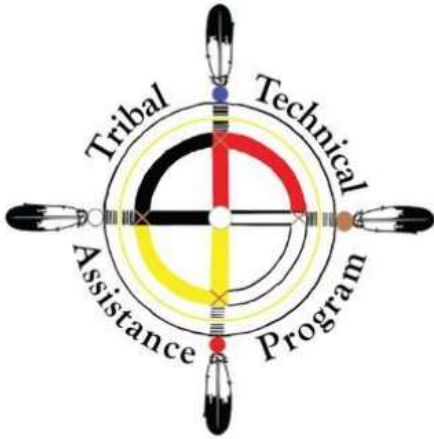
In Fall 2023, FHWA leadership implemented an administrative change moving the TTAP team from the Center for Local Aid Support to the Office of Tribal Transportation (OTT) to consolidate all Tribal transportation programs under one office. This move aims to improve the coordination of Tribal transportation services and foster new opportunities for collaboration in the delivery of OTT and TTAP services.

**A few thoughts from the OTT Director, Erin Kenley, regarding TTAP moving to OTT:**

*"With the TTAP moving under FHWA Office of Tribal Transportation, I wanted to share my excitement and vision in the new opportunities ahead as we seek to collaborate on the delivery of services with TTAP and LTAP Centers, our OTT Teams, BIA and beyond.*

*In addition to OTT's role administering the TTP directly with our FHWA Agreement Tribes, our office offers services to all Federally-designated Tribal nations. The TTAP Centers provide a unique service to all Tribal nations, offering go-to local training and technical assistance resources. Under the TTAP Center cooperative agreements, services are prioritized by Tribal needs across a spectrum of topics including the TTP.*

*As Federal operating agencies, OTT along with BIA have the important role and obligation to provide guidance, interpretation, and oversight. In this next generation of TTAP, OTT is specifically here to support in this area, addressing programmatic and regulatory training and technical assistance needs. OTT is committed to providing quality customer service to Tribal nations now in direct collaboration with our TTAP family. "*



*TTAP Logo, created by, Hollyanna Little*

FHWA TTAP team hosted a call for artwork for a new TTAP logo in 2022. The selected artwork was created by Hollyanna Little-from Yakama Nation. The logo is described as, “A roundabout with crosswalks that represent safety in Tribal communities. The colors represent land, air, fire, and water; and x’s symbolize working together across various boundaries. The Eagle feathers and medicine wheel represents all Tribes.” We feel this artwork truly embodies this next generation of TTAP as we seek to work together to serve Tribal transportation communities and professionals.

## Meet Western TTAP Center Director, Carrie Brown

Applied Pavement Technologies, Inc. has significant experience partnering with Tribal nations in Nevada delivering the Nevada Local Technical Assistance Program (NV LTAP) Center. The new Western TTAP Center is led by Director, Carrie Brown, who previously supported training and programs at the National Indian Justice Center (NIJC) in addition to serving as the Nevada LTAP Director. Ms. Brown led the organization of the first Nevada Asphalt Conference and established relationships with several Nevada counties and Tribes that previously had never been served by NV LTAP.

Carrie is passionate about Tribal sovereignty, infrastructure ownership, and empowering Tribes to build their internal capacity through skill acquisition and resources. Carrie is looking forward to partnering with fellow TTAPs from other regions to bring skill building workshops to Tribes. In the coming year, Carrie is focused on building a program that has the capacity to be responsive to unique Tribal needs and provide culturally relevant programming while encouraging best practices.



*Carrie Brown, personal image*

## 2024 National Transportation in Indian Country Conference (NTICC)

The FHWA TTAP team coordinates each year on national, tribal conference sponsorships that are prioritized by each TTAP Center's Steering Committee. This year the Southern TTAP Center at Oklahoma State University prioritized the NTICC as an event they wished to sponsor because it's being held in Durant, Oklahoma. The Southern TTAP Center sponsorship include:



*Southern TTAP Center Sponsor- Samantha Shepard and Kim Johnson*

- Scholarships for 16 Tribal members to attend NTICC from across the Southern TTAP Center region (KS, OK, TX).
- Technical training sessions including *Data Integration in Construction Management*.
- A TTAP booth where the Southern TTAP Center collected regional needs from local Tribal participants to inform the 2025 Annual Work Plan.

## OTT Webinars

### Update TTIP for FY 2025

OTT Planning is hosting a series of virtual office hours to provide technical assistance with the new TTIP template. Additional sessions are scheduled in January and March 2025.

- Date: October 15, 2024
- Time: 2:00 - 3:00 PM ET
- Location: Virtual
- Register [HERE](#)

### Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) 101

This self-paced introductory training provides an overview of the TTP program, funding, and implementation through FHWA for Tribal staff, leadership, and Tribal Transportation Program managers. [Link to Training](#).