

Arizona: Building Technical Capacity for Improved Tribal Consultation and Communication

Overview

Consultation between the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and tribal governments in transportation planning has been advancing due to coordination and information sharing efforts being initiated both by ADOT and the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA), an association of 19 member tribes. These organizations have been instrumental at building the technical capacity of state transportation planners and tribal members to undertake effective consultations within the transportation planning process. Both ADOT and ITCA have established staff positions to focus on improving state-tribal coordination and have developed internal mechanisms to facilitate communication.

Background

Arizona has the third largest American Indian population in the country, following California and Oklahoma. There are 22 Federally recognized Indian tribes in the State, which comprise approximately 5 percent of the total State population. The tribes are characterized by extreme differences in both tribal land holdings and population. For example, while the Navajo Nation had just over 100,000 people living on its land within Arizona, the Fort Yuma-Quechan Reservation had just 36, and four tribes had a population of less than 200 in 2000.¹ Tribal lands are located throughout the State, and American Indians can be found in all fifteen Arizona counties.

The Inter Tribal Council of Arizona was established in 1952 by tribal leaders to provide 19 member tribes with the means for action on matters that affected them collectively and individually,

Arizona Facts:

Federally Recognized Tribes:	22
Native American Population:	283,081
Total State Population:	5,579,222
<i>Source: U.S. Census 2003</i>	



Map of Tribal Lands in Arizona
(Courtesy of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona)

¹ U.S. Census 2000

to promote tribal sovereignty, and to strengthen tribal governments.² In 1975, the council established the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA), a private, non-profit corporation to provide independent analysis, information, and advocacy vital to Indian community self-development. The goal of ITCA and its commitment to member tribes is to continue to ensure the self-determination of Indian tribal governments through participation in the development of the policies and programs which affect their lives. Membership consists of elected officials from each tribe.

Tribal Involvement in Transportation Planning

Arizona's recent consultation efforts have been shaped by ongoing technical "capacity building" activities being undertaken both by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and by the tribal community through the ITCA. Both organizations are undertaking efforts to build planners' awareness of state and tribal opportunities for coordination and the processes for effective partnerships. Key mechanisms have been the development of dedicated staff positions within ADOT to focus on tribal transportation issues and the development of an ITCA Transportation Working Group to share information among staff. While ADOT staff has gained insight into the challenges facing tribes throughout the State, tribal staff with transportation responsibilities have become more aware of opportunities for their input into state-level planning. The increasingly strong relationship that has developed among those working on transportation has had tangible results; many tribes are creating full-time transportation positions, while ADOT has added tribal membership to key committees and special consultation sessions to statewide planning processes.

ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team and Tribal Liaisons

Since 1999, ADOT has established well known and highly visible tribal liaison positions in several sections of the department that interact frequently with tribal governments. These sections are Transportation Planning, the Environmental and Enhancement Group, Right-of-Way, and the Civil Rights Office. While in the past tribes worked most closely with ADOT district engineers in their districts, the ADOT statewide liaisons are able to provide additional subject area expertise and support collaboration efforts across regional boundaries.

Arizona DOT has an internal program to increase staff knowledge of tribal transportation concerns and of methods for increasing the effectiveness of consultation.

The ADOT tribal liaisons created the ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team (ATSPT) as a body committed to improving the efficiency and outcomes of tribal consultation in the State through *internal* changes at the department headquarters. Recognizing that partnering across many department sections will minimize overlap and streamline consultation processes, the ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team has worked since 1999 as a cooperative effort among tribal liaisons to inform all ADOT staff about effective tribal consultation practices. The group has circulated information about planned

² Though there are 22 Federally recognized tribes, two tribes, the San Juan Southern Paiute and the Pueblo of Zuni, are not involved in transportation planning in Arizona. The San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe does not currently have a reservation land base, and the Pueblo of Zuni Tribe is headquartered in New Mexico. The Navajo Nation, through its Department of Transportation, works directly with ADOT and FHWA, separate from the ICTA.

consultations and contacts throughout the department to limit redundancies. In order to raise ADOT staff awareness of tribal issues outside the department, FHWA, BIA, ITCA, and tribal leaders have all been invited to present information and propose solution strategies at the ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team meetings regarding their planning processes and current challenges being addressed.

In 2002 and 2003, the ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team held a series of three State-Tribal Transportation Forums in each of the north, south, and western regions of the State in order to stimulate dialogue between people working on various transportation processes in Arizona. Each forum had approximately 70 stakeholders in attendance including staff from ADOT headquarters and district offices, FHWA, BIA, ITCA, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and councils of governments (COGs), as well as local government officials, tribal councilmen, tribal



**Photo of the Western Arizona Regional Forum
(Courtesy of the Arizona Department of
Transportation)**

planners, and tribal members. At each meeting, time was given to ADOT, FHWA, BIA and MPOs/COGs to present an overview of planning and consultation processes and to identify potential points and parties for additional consultation. Proceedings from each forum have been prepared and distributed to all the participants. This will make the information available to new staff with less experience in state and tribal transportation planning in Arizona.

Arizona DOT is developing outreach materials to explain the statewide transportation planning process and to locate potential resources for tribes.

The ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team is currently working on developing a partnership training guide, a statewide tribal consultation policy, and a transportation resource guidebook to assist tribal planners and leadership in identifying additional opportunities for involvement with the State.

ITCA Transportation Working Group

While the ITCA is focused on expanding consultation, coordination and cooperation between tribes and the State on many issues, the ITCA recognized the key role that transportation plays in connecting tribal members and non-members alike. Consequently, the ITCA created an intertribal Transportation Working Group in 1998, and hired a dedicated transportation coordinator to oversee the group. The formation of the working group and hiring of the coordinator have been critical for meeting ITCA's goals with respect to transportation planning.

The ITCA Transportation Working Group has had a bimonthly meeting schedule, which for the past two years has rotated locations around the State. The group recently decided to hold future meetings in Phoenix on a quarterly basis – this timing and location appears best for maximizing participation by tribes and Federal and State agency guests. The

group will also hold special meetings at reservations when requested by a particular tribe. Each of the 19 ITCA member tribes has a designated liaison to attend the working group meetings and report information to its tribal council and planning staff. In addition, the working group coordinator prepares meeting summaries and newsletters that are sent to each tribal government and its liaison. This has been a very effective way to provide information to transportation planners at small tribes where travel costs and resources are often issues.

The working group coordinator organizes each working group meeting and acts as a facilitator, in addition to delivering presentations on current issues and inviting guest speakers to present. Many tribal planners cited the usefulness of these presentations as a major factor in their continued participation at the meetings. For example, at the December 2005 working group meeting, the agenda included the following items.

- Future BIA-ITCA sponsored training on the Road Information Field Data System;
- Proceedings from two recent BIA- ADOT meetings attended by ITCA;
- New requirements for development of a Safety Management Systems that would require BIA to consult with tribes;
- Progress on an ADOT-ITCA study, “Building Tribal Traffic Safety Capacity”;
- A FHWA-ITCA sponsored seat belt use campaign on two reservations.

Regular guest attendees from ADOT, FHWA, and BIA usually provide status updates on agency issues or respond to questions raised at earlier meetings. The Governor’s Office of Highway Safety presented recent safety initiatives. The ADOT Tribal Liaison responded to questions raised at the previous meeting regarding access to the State’s Highway Expansion and Extension Loan Program. He also reported on follow up activities at the transportation department since the March 2004 Governor’s Tribal Summit on Transportation.

Finally, the ITCA Transportation Working Group has been very successful at linking diverse and busy tribal transportation planners with one another. They are kept current on project updates across the State and upcoming consultation meetings, in addition to sharing information on successful programs and funding opportunities. The ITCA meetings have built strong working relationships between ADOT and tribal transportation planners and formed a solid foundation for future consultation processes to build upon.

Results

Tribal consultation in Arizona has been streamlined in ways which would not have been possible without the existence of both the ITCA Transportation Working Group and the ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team. The working relationships developed through these technical capacity building efforts have yielded tangible results. Statewide planning processes now emphasize early and ongoing tribal involvement, as demonstrated by the active involvement of tribal members and planners in the most recent update to the

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statewide Long Range Transportation Plan. In addition, tribes have learned about opportunities for technical assistance and funding from the State. For instance, in response to a presentation by ADOT at an ITCA Transportation Working Group meeting, a tribal government pursued participation in ADOT's Small Area Transportation Studies program to develop a transportation plan for their community.

MoveAZ Long Range Transportation Plan

Arizona's most recent Long Range Transportation planning effort, "MoveAZ," actively encouraged tribal input for the first time. The relationships and awareness of tribes' planning mechanisms that came from the ITCA Transportation Working Group and ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team discussions helped MoveAZ incorporate tribal input on the ADOT consultation process, future planning needs, and specific project prioritization.

First, an effort was made to incorporate tribal perspectives by including the ITCA Transportation Working Group coordinator on the external steering committee board, responsible for project oversight and direction. Similarly, an internal ADOT steering committee included representation by the ADOT tribal liaison. Both of these positions provided a mechanism for tribal perspectives to be considered in process decision-making and led to the direct distribution of particular decision items to tribes for comment.

Second, ADOT was able to use relationships with the ITCA tribal transportation working group members to more directly target tribal members to participate in public meetings across the State. Previous public involvement processes had extended formal invitations to tribal leaders and sent general announcements to them as well. This met with limited success in reaching individual members since tribal members are located throughout the State. ADOT presented information on the planning process and the upcoming meeting schedule at the transportation working group meetings. Through input gained from these meetings, the agency was better informed about locations and public involvement methods that would solicit the most input from tribes. Three of the 10 general public forums were held on tribal lands, in Window Rock, Sells, and Parker.

Finally, special "focus group" meetings solely with Native Americans were held to obtain input into the planning process and outcomes. The focus group meetings were organized to coincide with scheduled ITCA transportation working group meetings and several announcements and phone calls were sent to tribal planners well in advance. The meetings included tribal members, planners, and leadership; attendance in Phoenix was highest with around 20 participants, while more rural meetings were less well attended, usually 8 to 10 members.

At some general public meetings and more often at the focus group meetings, projects were identified by tribes for consideration in the final MoveAZ plan. These included widening, alignment, and access improvement to freeways crossing tribal lands; expanding the use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) to identify tourism opportunities on tribal lands; and improving safety through such measures as expanding narrow shoulders, increasing signage, and adding rumble stripping.

Small Area Transportation Studies

In response to a presentation by ADOT at an ITCA transportation working group meeting, the San Carlos Apache Tribe approached ADOT to become the first Indian Tribe to become involved in ADOT's Small Area Transportation Studies program. Though the program has been offered since 1988, no tribes had previously used it to develop a long range transportation plan for the reservation as required in the Indian Reservations Road (IRR) Program. This is an excellent example what can result from the information exchange at ITCA working group meetings. Without this information, the San Carlos Apache Tribe would have had difficulty updating an almost 10 year old transportation plan, with very little funding or technical assistance available.

Recognizing the need for increased long range planning on reservations and rural areas of the State while acknowledging tribal and local government funding constraints, ADOT reduced the local matching funds requirement from 50 percent local to 20 percent local. The San Carlos tribal planner pursued an innovative funding arrangement with the department, proposing a combination of 80 percent Federal funding with State Planning and Research (SPR) funds and 20 percent BIA IRR Program funding. A tribal letter of commitment and resolution has been signed by the tribal council and BIA.

Through involvement in the ITCA, the San Carlos Apache Tribe learned about opportunities to participate in ADOT's Small Area Transportation Studies program. The tribe pursued an innovative funding arrangement, using Indian Reservations Roads Program funding as the local match, in order to develop a needed long-range transportation plan.

An intergovernmental agreement between the State and San Carlos Apache Tribe will be completed soon; planning work is scheduled to start in early 2006. While the Tribe is the first to take advantage of ADOT's technical expertise preparing small areas plans, several other tribes have noted the innovative program through the ITCA network and are currently studying it.

Lessons Learned

The ITCA Transportation Working Group and the ADOT Tribal Strategic Partnering Team have improved consultation efforts by building working relationships and identifying opportunities for input among transportation planners at ADOT and the ITCA member tribes. Lessons that could be applied elsewhere include the following.

- Providing a forum to link tribal planners from several smaller tribes is an effective means to streamline the consultation process. Members with access to less funding and fewer opportunities for involvement find a community in which to share ideas.
- Coordinating tribal consultation notices and procedures across ADOT sections has successfully minimized overlap and confusion. Successful practices and knowledge of tribal concerns are being shared among staff to create procedural continuity in the future.
- Assignment of tribal liaison responsibilities to positions within State DOTs can lead to strong working relationships and development of trust between State DOT staff and tribal planners; these in turn can lead to tangible project results. With trust and results, these relationships solidify and support continuing participation in consultation between individual tribes and the State.

Future Challenges

The consultation process in Arizona has greatly benefited from the establishment of dedicated staff at the DOT and in the ITCA Transportation Working Group focused on coordination efforts between the tribes and the State. These positions have been able to link the parties with one another and encourage ongoing tribal participation in transportation planning at the State level. A future challenge is to find ways to fund dedicated transportation staff at each tribe to continue this work and to address local issues as well.

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Other Resources

MoveAZ Appendix C and Chapter 2: <http://www.moveaz.org/>
ADOT Tribal Transportation Website: www.aztribaltransportation.com
ITCA Transportation Working Group Website:
www.itcaonline.com/program_transport.html