

Dept. of Transportation: Federal grant helps build Tribal Technical Assistance Program Center in Wisconsin

Posted on Wednesday, Aug 23, 2023

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Federal funding is helping Wisconsin create a Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) Center for 65 Tribal Nations across 30 states, including Wisconsin. The Traffic Operations and Safety Laboratory (TOPS Lab) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) received the two-year \$625,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) will work through the TTAP Center to support transportation investments on tribal lands and other tribal initiatives related to training, technical assistance and technology services.

“Wisconsin has the highest concentration of tribal communities in any state east of the Mississippi River,” WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson. “We are proud of our government-to-government relationships with the 11 federally recognized Tribes in Wisconsin. This federal grant will help strengthen those partnerships and allow us to continue making strategic transportation investments on Tribal lands. We’re excited to see how this federal funding can leverage Wisconsin as a leader to implement solutions to roadway safety on tribal lands not only in our state, but across 30 states.”

This really underscores that we’re not just working within university or state boundaries but across the United States,” TOPS Lab Traffic Safety Engineer Research Program Manager Andi Bill said. “We’re bringing high-quality research to the local level, and we’re very excited to work with our partners across the Tribal communities. WisDOT has been an active leader in Tribal coordination and we’re

ready to add to some of the wonderful work that they've done.”

The TTAP Center better equips Tribal Nations and WisDOT to work collaboratively on transportation investments on tribal lands. WisDOT has a long-lasting commitment and robust collaboration with Tribal Nations across the state. [WisDOT's Tribal Affairs program](#) initiative works exclusively on tribal relations and all transportation related issues affecting tribal communities. Some examples include:

- **Dual-language highway signs** – Five Tribes in Wisconsin now have dual-language road signs on their tribal lands. These signs welcome travelers to tribal communities in English and native languages.
- **WisDOT Region Tribal Liaisons** – Serve as first point of contact for all transportation issues impacting tribal communities, and strive to develop trusting and mutually respectful relationships.
- **Tribal Historic Preservation Project** – Created to strengthen tribal participation in WisDOT programming and projects with a focus on historic preservation and environmental issues.
- **Inter-Tribal Task Force** – Policy advisory group regarding any transportation related matters that may impact tribal communities.
- **Tribal Labor Advisory Committee** – Aims to develop strategies to enhance Native American job opportunities on state and federal highway projects, and other transportation projects, by offering training, job matching, placement and ongoing technical support.
- **Tribal Transportation Conference** – Annual tribal transportation conference features presentations on safety, business and labor, cultural and environmental and general transportation programs. The conference brings together industry, tribal, federal and state officials.

Wisconsin is home to 11 federally recognized Tribes, including the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Forest County Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk Nation, Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Oneida Nation, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Sokaogon Chippewa Community – Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, and Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians.

Upon renewal by the Federal Highway Administration, the UW-Madison TOPS Lab could receive \$300,000 each year for three years to continue the work of the TTAP Center. Due to the large geographic service area, UW-Madison has partnered with

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University and New York State Local Technical Assistance Program Center housed at Cornell University.