



THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Nearly 350 people gathered at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Headquarters in Washington D.C. for the first-ever TCP Convening, hosted by DOT and the Build America Bureau's Thriving Communities Program (TCP). The two-day event, held November 30-December 1, 2023, connected leaders from 62 disadvantaged communities with federal agency staff to learn, collaborate, and boost infrastructure access. Opening remarks by Secretary Pete Buttigieg and a leadership panel kicked things off, followed by plenary discussions, workshops, and networking sessions across two days.



The focus: Help communities deliver transformative transportation projects through federal investments.

In attendance: Fiscal Year 2022 TCP Capacity Builders, representatives of 62 of the 64 selected Communities, and federal agency partners at the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Health and Human Services, and the General Services Administration. The event included opening remarks from Secretary Pete Buttigieg; along with remarks by Mitch Landrieu, Senior Advisor to the U.S. President for Infrastructure Coordination; Dr. Jalonne White-Newsome, White House Senior Director for Environmental Justice; Carlos Monje, Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy (DOT); Shailen Bhatt, Federal Highway Administrator (DOT); Veronica Vanterpool, Federal Transit Deputy Administrator (DOT); and Dr. Morteza Farajian, Build America Bureau Executive Director.

Plenary Session Key Points:

Thriving Communities Network Plenary. Speakers: Lynda Tran, Senior Advisor to the Secretary and Director of Public Engagement (DOT); Christopher Coes, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy (DOT); Matthew S. Tejada, Ph.D., Deputy Assistant Administrator for Environmental Justice (EPA); and Ana Mascareñas, Senior Advisor for Environmental Justice and Climate Change, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (HHS).

- Put communities at the helm and embrace a bottom-up revolution where decisions flow from the ground up, powered by the voices of those most impacted.
- Lift up disadvantaged and underserved communities; it's not just about inclusivity, it's about redirecting the flow of government resources and support to channel them directly to those most needing it.
- Bringing a whole of government approach yields dividends in outcomes for communities and the country.

Meaningful Public Involvement Plenary. Speakers: Raffi Freedman-Gurspan, Deputy Director of Office of Public Engagement (DOT); Ariel Gold, Senior Policy Analyst of Office of the Under Secretary for Transportation Policy (DOT); Harriet Tregoning, Director New Urban Mobility Alliance; Stephanie Gidigbi Jenkins, Vice President of Strategy Communities First Fund; and Olatunji Oboi Reed, President and CEO Equiticity Ventures.

- Shared highlights of the DOT Public Involvement Guide, with focus on active engagement.
- This Guide is a toolkit for bringing community voices to the forefront of every transportation project. It shows you how to open the doors and embrace community input from the beginning.
- Transportation planning and project delivery is not just about pouring concrete. It's about listening to concerns, adjusting plans, and ensuring the project serves everyone, not just a select few.



- The DOT's Guide isn't just a static document; it's a call to action. It's a megaphone for amplifying community voices and ensuring that transportation systems genuinely serve the people.

Community Wealth Building and Workforce Development Plenary. Speakers: Irene Marion, Director of Departmental Office of Civil Rights (DOT); Tyra Redus, Deputy Director of Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (DOT); Paige Shevlin, Strategic Advisor for Infrastructure Workforce Development (DOT); and Beverly A. Scott Ph.D., CEO Beverly Scott Associates.

- Discussed the need to empower our communities, build wealth, expand access, and intervene where needed. Unbundle procurements to create more opportunities for small businesses.
- Create pathways to advance workforce development for all, including youth. Partner with employers, labor, schools, and other stakeholders outside the traditional transportation space to leverage opportunities.
- There is an untapped opportunity in transportation infrastructure jobs – the moment is now.

Housing Plenary. Speakers: Mariia Zimmerman, Strategic Advisor for Technical Assistance and Community Solutions (DOT); Marion McFadden, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development (HUD); Danielle Arigoni, Managing Director of Policy and Solutions of National Housing Trust; and Jeffrey Lubell, Principal Associate for Housing and Asset Building of Abt Associates.

- Before pinpointing needed transportation projects for a specific location, transportation practitioners must understand the community and region's housing challenges.
- Local staff and elected leaders must juggle housing, zoning, and transportation needs, carefully considering the tradeoffs between each.
- The HUD funding Navigator tool can guide you through funding options from various agencies, helping you tackle those housing challenges head-on.

Community of Practice (CoP) Breakouts Key Points:

Speakers: The Ray (Networked Communities CoP), Rocky Mountain Institute (Complete Neighborhoods CoP), Main Street Center, Inc. (Main Streets CoP), WSP USA, Inc. (Complete Transit-Oriented Neighborhoods CoP)

- Each CoP explored selected topics, uncovering both opportunities and hurdles. Participants networked, shared knowledge, and bonded with cohorts.

Topic-based Workshops Key Points:

Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD).

Speakers: WSP USA, Inc.

- ETOD in action: Using transit to fuel equitable growth in your community

Transportation and Climate Change.

Speakers: RMI and DOT

- Brainstorming cleaner commutes: Design tweaks, travel choices, zero emission vehicles (ZEVs), curbing emissions with smarter cities, and electrification options

- Explore USDOT's funding options for highways, ZEVs, and beyond.

Leveraging the Main Street Approach in Transportation.

Speakers: Main Street America

- Brainstorming what and how businesses, events, and tweaks could revitalize the heart of the city.

Multi-Disciplinary Panel – Layer Cake Approach to Planning and Developing Integrated Infrastructure.

Speakers: The Ray

- Your grant success guide: Uncovering funding, navigating stages, and crafting winning proposals.

Build America Bureau's Innovative Finance Workshop.

Speakers: DOT, Build America Bureau

- Consider loans and bonds, not just grants, to jumpstart your infrastructure projects.
- Experts can help you navigate the project lifecycle, from funding options to permit hurdles.