



Connecting the DOTs

Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization Newsletter

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OSDBU Director Updates



Here at the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), we continue to make significant strides in supporting small businesses and fostering economic growth. We are proud to announce the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has awarded the USDOT an "A" on its annual FY23 Scorecard for the 15th year in a row, reflecting our ongoing commitment to providing exceptional opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses. This achievement underscores our dedication to inclusivity and excellence in our contracting processes.

In addition to this recognition, we are steadfast in our efforts to propel the USDOT Wealth Creation Tour. This initiative is designed to engage and empower communities by offering critical resources and information to small businesses, particularly those in underserved areas. By facilitating access to capital, contracts, and other essential support, the Wealth Creation Tour aims to build sustainable economic growth and bridge the gap for businesses striving to succeed in a competitive market. Our most recent stops on the tour took place at the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) National Meeting and Training Conference (Houston TX); AMAC's Airport Business Diversity Conference (Nashville, TN); and HBCU Week (Philadelphia, PA).

We also recently hosted the [Pathways to Entrepreneurship](#) event on September 10, 2024, at the USDOT headquarters with 400 participants, in-person and virtual. This one-day pilot program served as an introduction to a dynamic platform for aspiring entrepreneurs, small business owners, HBCUs and students to connect with industry experts, gain valuable insights, and explore opportunities within the emerging transportation sector. We look forward to sharing more about the future of this program to continue to champion the growth and success of small businesses nationwide.

Let's continue the great work!

Tyra L. Redus, Esq., CDE

OSDBU Director

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OSDBU HIGHLIGHTS

Pathways to Entrepreneurship Pilot Event



Academic and governmental leaders discuss emerging technologies and transportation research at the afternoon panel.

USDOT Launches Pathways to Entrepreneurship Pilot Program

On September 10, 2024, U.S. DOT successfully launched Pathways to Entrepreneurship (P2E): *Powering Small Businesses in Emerging Transportation Markets*, which brought together small business owners, academic leaders, and transportation stakeholders to the U.S. Department of Transportation Headquarters in Washington, D.C. The event attracted approximately 400 participants from across the country to experience an overview of the comprehensive P2E pilot program which is a capacity-building and technical assistance program created to empower small and disadvantaged businesses seeking to pivot into new and emerging transportation markets; engage Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) institutions; and educate aspiring HBCU students with an entrepreneurial mindset eager to explore new transportation markets and help them consider transportation career options upon graduation.

P2E featured leaders from the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Department of Energy, who were joined by state DOT leaders, nationally acclaimed visionaries, policy-makers, researchers, and entrepreneurs. Together, they participated in impactful panel discussions and presentations, offering insights and strategies for small businesses to enter emerging transportation markets.

“I am pleased with the overwhelming success of the Pathways to Entrepreneurship pilot program event because it exemplifies our commitment to providing small and disadvantaged businesses with access to high-level, high-quality resources and knowledge to grow their businesses and ultimately create wealth,” said Tyra Redus, Esq., CDE, Director of the U.S. DOT Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). “We are excited about the next phase of the Pathways to Entrepreneurship program.”



Tyra Redus, OSDBU Director provides overview of P2E program.

The day began with an overview of OSDBU's work by Director Redus, followed by opening remarks from Eric Morrissette, Acting Under Secretary of the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), U.S. Department of Commerce; and Irene Marion, Director of the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, USDOT.



OSDBU HIGHLIGHTS

Pathways to Entrepreneurship Pilot Event



Eric Morrisette, Acting Under Secretary of the Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce shares opening remarks.

The morning sessions featured engaging panel discussions with federal and state government experts, highlighting the financial and business development case for small businesses to "follow the money" and move into emerging transportation markets. The panels underscored the importance of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in creating wealth and the opportunities these emerging transportation markets provide.

"It was a great pleasure for me to serve as a presenter and panelist for the P2E gathering. With strong support from USDOT, especially OSDBU, many DBEs will have a chance to play at a leveled field in the emerging transportation market. Leading research in many disciplines, such as autonomous mobility, safety, and supply chain management, North Carolina A&T State University has played a critical role in educating the next generation of engineers, scientists and managers.

With this initiative, we are renewing our commitment to assist, collaborate and empower many DBEs to be successful entrepreneurs," said Dr. Rongfang (Rachel) Liu, Director of Transportation Institute and UPS Endowed Professor, North Carolina A&T State University.

The afternoon session focused on emerging technologies and transportation research, with presentations from academic and governmental leaders on topics such as Electric Vehicles (EV), Autonomous Vehicles (AV), and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). These forward-looking advances in transportation generated great interest and excitement about the future. "The event was very informative, and I plan to follow up with the panelists and pursue the contracting opportunities they shared from their agencies. It was encouraging to hear about the opportunities and to witness the panelists' passion for working with SWMBEs," said Lasenta Lewis-Ellis, President and CEO of LLE Construction Group, one of the P2E participants.

Steronica Mattocks, Lead Program Analyst for USDOT OSDBU, noted, "This pilot program event is another example of OSDBU's continued mission to helping small and disadvantaged businesses grow through programs and capacity-building trainings." Karen R. Jenkins, President and CEO of KRJ Consulting, added, "KRJ Consulting is proud to have partnered with OSDBU on the Pathways to Entrepreneurship program, and look forward to its future achievements."

The Pathways to Entrepreneurship (P2E) program has three pillars or "pathways" to entrepreneurship designed for Small and Disadvantaged Businesses, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and HBCU students. The small and disadvantaged businesses pillar program is anticipated to be launched initially, and is planned to be followed by the other P2E pillars. The small and disadvantaged businesses pillar program is designed for those businesses who have the capacity and capability to pivot or transition into emerging technology markets in the transportation industry.



Top to Bottom: Steronica Mattocks, USDOT OSDBU Lead Program Analyst; Karen R. Jenkins, KRJ Consulting CEO

USDOT HIGHLIGHTS

USDOT DBE Modernization and Wealth Creation



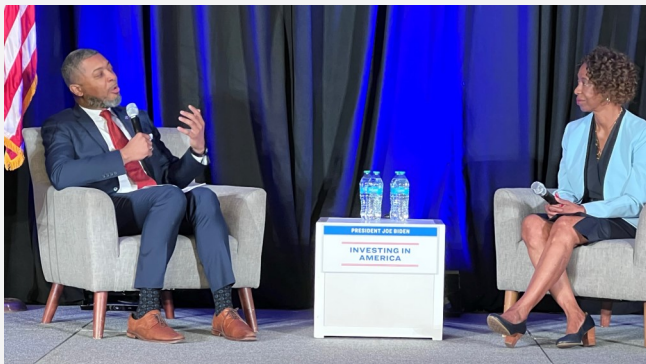
Newly Modernized DBE and ACDBE Program Regulations



Scan to learn more about the DBE/ACDBE Final Rule

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) has allotted billions of dollars for transportation infrastructure projects. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) has committed to leveling the playing field for disadvantaged businesses to compete for such projects through the newly modernized DBE and ACDBE Program Regulations. Effective May 9, 2024, the modifications included in the DBE/ACDBE Final Rule:

- Amend certification eligibility requirements
- Improve initial certification process
- Expedite interstate certification process
- Strengthen contract monitoring and prompt payment requirements

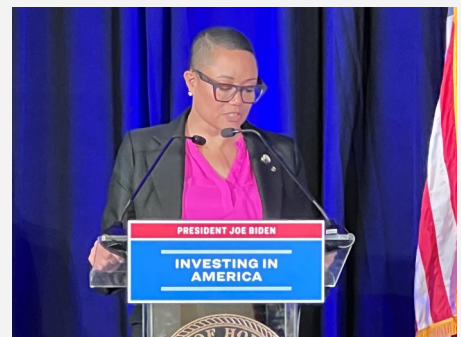


Christopher Coes, Acting Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy highlights generational wealth-building opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses.

USDOT Kicks Off Investing in America: Wealth Creation Tour

The Investing in America: Wealth Creation Tour has begun! As part of the Equity Action Plan's wealth creation commitment, this tour will stop in several U.S. cities to engage local communities and business owners. OSDBU, along with other operating administrations, local project partners and funding recipients, have joined efforts with the Departmental Office of Civil Rights (DOCR) to:

- Host community outreach and small business resource events in cities where USDOT will have a presence at national industry conferences
- Highlight local projects, transportation equity, and wealth creation benefits and opportunities
- Discuss USDOT's transportation equity and wealth creation focus areas and resources (DBE/ACDBE Final Rule; OSDBU resources; DOT workforce development initiative, etc.)
- Discuss how USDOT and the Biden-Harris Administration are addressing historical barriers for inclusion experienced by historically disadvantaged communities seeking jobs and contract opportunities on federally funded projects and initiatives.



Irene Marion, USDOT Departmental Office of Civil Rights Director sharing remarks at Wealth Creation Tour stop.



OSDBU ON THE ROAD

Engaging with the Small Business Community Across the Nation



Left to Right: Hannah Puna, Clark Atlanta University Student Leader with Polly Trottenberg, USDOT Deputy Secretary.

Celebrating 15 Years of WITI Empowering Women to Explore Transportation Careers

On April 26, 2024, the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) and Mid-South Atlantic (MSA) region Small Business Transportation Resource Center (SBTRC), joined by Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg celebrated the 15-year anniversary of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Women and Girls In Transportation Initiative (WITI) program at Clark Atlanta University. The event marked a significant milestone for the program of empowering transportation pathways for women across the nation. The celebration event also included a panel discussion of U.S. DOT Senior Political Appointees sharing their insights on gender inequity and over-coming barriers to succeed in the transportation industry with HBCU participants. Additionally, panel discussions with WITI alumni, women CEO small businesses, and Departmental leadership officials to share career path opportunities.

Fifteen years ago, WITI was piloted at Spelman College through the USDOT Mid-South Atlantic (MSA) Small Business Transportation Resource Center (SBTRC), under the leadership of the late Thomas (Tommy) W. Dortch, Jr., and Joseph (Joe) Jackson. The remarkable success of the pilot led to the establishment of the WITI program, requiring all regional SBTRCs to administer a program in their respective regions.

Today, the program is primarily known for placing interns, primarily STEM students, into internships with various levels of government, private sector, and non-profits. The WITI program is hosted by the Small Business Transportation Resource Centers (SBTRCs) established in 11 regions across the United States.



Left to Right: Steronica Mattocks, USDOT OSDBU Lead Program Analyst and WITI Program Manager moderates an alumni panel at the 15-year WITI celebration event.

OSDBU ON THE ROAD

Engaging with the Small Business Community Across the Nation



OSDBU Director Tyra Redus participates on the “Historically Underutilized Business Forum” panel at COMTO.

OSDBU Joins Transportation Industry Leaders at 53rd COMTO Conference

In July, the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) leadership and staff attended the 53rd National Meeting and Training Conference, themed “Meeting the Moment”. In addition, the team was joined by members of the Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, OSDBU’s host center for the Gulf Small Business Transportation Resource Center (SBTRC). During the “Historically Underutilized Business Forum” (sponsored by United Airlines and Olivier/Link Transportation), OSDBU Director Tyra Redus joined with other industry experts to share impactful information about U.S. Department of

Transportation initiatives and wealth creation strategies for small and disadvantaged businesses.

39th Annual Airport Business Diversity Conference (AMAC) in Nashville, TN

In partnership with the Nashville International Airport, the 39th Annual AMAC Airport Business Diversity Conference was held from August 3-7, 2024 in Nashville, TN. The conference was an opportunity for businesses, aviation professionals, government officials and attendees from around the country to learn and discuss various topics from how to do business at airports to public policy issues impacting the aviation industry as a whole.



OSDBU joins various USDOT transportation representatives at the 39th AMAC Conference.

The conference serves as a hub for education, advocacy and networking opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion in the aviation and aerospace industries. OSDBU’s Director Tyra Redus, USDOT Acting Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy Christopher Coes, Director of the Departmental Office of Civil Rights Irene Marion, and Director of the National External Operations and Policy Programs at FAA Gene Roth engaged in dialogue with Airport CEOs and Directors.



Left to Right: Thomasine Johnson, USDOT OSDBU Executive Staff Assistant; Lynn Bailey, USDOT DBE Program Analyst; Tyra Redus, USDOT OSDBU Director; Steronica Mattocks, USDOT OSDBU Lead Program Analyst; Samuel J. Boyd, Jr., USDOT OSDBU Access to Capital Initiative; and Tony Arps, Gulf SBTRC Project Director.



OSDBU ON THE ROAD

Engaging with the Small Business Community Across the Nation

Northwest Region New SBTRC Center Host

On May 29, 2024, the [Northwest Small Business Transportation Resource Center \(SBTRC\)](#) held a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of their offices in Richland, Washington. The featured speakers at the ribbon cutting event included Northwest SBTRC Project Director and emcee Chaune Fitzgerald; U.S. DOT Office of Public Engagement Associate Director Aloha Ley; and U.S. DOT OSDBU Lead Program Analyst and WITI Program Manager Steronica Mattocks. A total of 44 in-person and 8 virtual participants attended including SBA and MBDA representatives, and multiple small businesses.

On May 30, 2024, the new Northwest SBTRC delivered their first ever Women & Girls in Transportation Initiative (WITI) program focused on electric vehicles. Students from the region were able to both observe and experience various electric vehicles during the ribbon cutting of the host organization’s newest charging stations. Subsequently, the students then participated in an exercise of making their own miniature versions of electric vehicles.

Steronica Mattocks, the U.S. DOT OSDBU WITI Program Manager shared the mission of WITI is to increase the participation of women in the transportation industry and prepare young women to



Northwest SBTRC hosts industry representatives for ribbon cutting event of new charging stations and electric vehicles program.



Left to right: Robbin Calloway, NW SBTRC Project Coordinator; Teena Curry, USDOT Program Analyst; Steronica Mattocks, USDOT Lead Program Analyst; WITI Intern; Eric Fitzgerald, NW SBTRC Executive Director; WITI Intern; Aloha Ley, OPE Associate Director; Kristina Benjamin, OPE Special Assistant; and Chaune Fitzgerald, NW SBTRC Project Director .

become our nation’s future leaders in transportation. Additionally, U.S. DOT Office of Public Engagement Associate Director Aloha Ley spoke about her own career trajectory while delivering an inspiring speech about careers in transportation.

The Northwest SBTRC works closely with the transportation contracting community and other technical assistance providers to offer no-cost programs designed to enhance the capabilities of small and disadvantaged businesses in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

OSDBU ON THE ROAD

Engaging with the Small Business Community Across the Nation



Thriving Communities Network Northeast Convening in Manchester, NH

On July 29, 2024, USDOT OSDBU participated in the Thriving Communities Network Northeast Convening in Manchester, New Hampshire to support the USDOT Build America Bureau with rural outreach and engagement to a variety of technical assistance providers and capacity builders. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and other USDOT members was represented during the Rural Opportunities to Use

Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Initiative program. There was also government inter-agency participation including representatives from HUD, FEMA, USDA, EPA, GSA, DOE, and SBA as well as participation from many state and local economic development organizations in the Northern New England states of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.



OSDBU participated in panel discussion led by Rob Hyman, USDOT ROUTES Program Manager.

White House Investing in Rural America Tour Stop in Freeport, ME



Left to Right: Pete Buttigieg, USDOT Secretary; Lizbeth Rodriguez, Northeast SBTRC Program Director; Peter Kontakos, OSDBU Regional Assistance Division Manager

USDOT OSDBU participated in the White House Investing in Rural America Tour series in Freeport, ME on August 6, 2024. Remarks were provided by USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg and a roundtable discussion followed with a variety of state, local, and rural stakeholders.

Additionally, a resource fair was led by the USDOT Northeast Region Small Business Transportation Resource Center (SBTRC) and accompanied by many Federal interagency stakeholders including SBA, USDA, EPA, VA and HUD as well as state and local technical assistance and resource providers.

The event also marked the Secretary's 50th state visited during his tenure!





SUCCESS STORIES

Recognizing & Celebrating our Small Business Community

U.S. DOT Central SBTRC Client Expands Generational Construction Hauling Business

Ray LaFore Truck Service, Inc. has been a family business since 1946. For many years, Megan Bertelsman's aunt and uncle owned a majority of the business, however, in April 2002, they asked Megan if she was interested in being her own boss. Megan took the opportunity to learn more about the company, and by the same year she was ready to run it solo. By 2004, she became the owner of the company.

LaFore is a construction hauling and material supply company specializing in hauling materials such as rock, dirt, sand, and asphalt. They are committed to providing the best service possible. The previous generation operated eight trucks, but with Megan at the helm, the operation has expanded the fleet to 30 trucks. She attributes her success to time, patience, risk-taking, and teamwork. Over the years, Megan has learned many lessons, with attention to detail being the most significant factor in her success.

In 2008, Megan obtained her Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and other certifications through the following certifying participants: Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Missouri Department of Transportation (MODOT), METRO, Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion's Business Enterprise Program (CEIBEP), City of St. Louis, and St. Louis International Airport-Lambert. In addition, LaFore Truck Service, Inc. is a member of the Mid-West Truckers Association. Megan has also applied for her Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) and 8(a) certification through the U.S. Small Business Administration and hopes to begin heavy civil and site preparation work in the near future.



Megan Bertelsman, Owner and Operator of Ray LaFore Truck Service, Inc.

Megan was part of the [Central Small Business Transportation Resource Center's \(SBTRC\) Bonding Education Program](#) this past spring. She started the program with no bonding capacity and little knowledge of how to apply for such. Today, she has \$2 million in bonding capacity! "The program gave me many valuable contacts and I learned various aspects of scaling the business to the next level, from MODOT's hands-on presentation showing the cohort the process of bidding and letting schedules to OSHA safety", Megan stated. She was pleased with the exposure and support from the Central SBTRC, which she found very responsive and energetic. Graduation day was bittersweet as she enjoyed the cohort so much, she didn't want it to end. However, she looks forward to participating in future Central SBTRC events and classes.

www.laforetruckservice.com ● (618) 233-0774 ● 5805 West State Route 161, Belleville, IL 62223

Article provided by Central Small Business Transportation Resource Center

SUCCESS STORIES

Recognizing & Celebrating our Small Business Community



U.S. DOT Southeast SBTRC Small Business Client Secures Atlanta Bridge Contract



Jimmy Morris, Jr., Owner and Managing Member of Morris Builders, LLC

Morris Builders, LLC is an Alabama-based and certified DBE and MBE building company which provides construction services, project management, and rebar reinforcing installation. The firm's work on the I-285/SR400 Bridge Project in Atlanta, GA was a significant step in scaling their operations, made possible by accessing larger capital and expanding their team. Despite the challenges of managing a larger workload, their new project management tools and an expanded workforce allowed them to deliver exceptional results. Morris Builders, LLC successfully executed this project, strengthening relationships with key clients that led to new opportunities, including securing the ADOC New Men's Prison Modular Cells project.

The firm has secured over \$750K in federal contracts, \$2.8M in state contracts, and \$1.8M in local contracts. The business has experienced 10% in overall revenue growth, increase in staffing, and is recognized as an industry leader in construction. Growth has not been without challenges, but the company was able to access larger capital and expand the team during times of adversity.

Morris Builders' experience with the [Southeast Small Business Transportation Resource Center \(SBTRC\)](#) has been instrumental in the success and growth of Morris Builders, LLC. The SBTRC's support has provided the small business firm with essential resources, training, and connections that have significantly impacted their ability to scale the business and take on more complex, high-profile projects.



"Their guidance in navigating industry challenges and opportunities has empowered us to strengthen our operations, expand our client base, and secure repeat business. The SBTRC has been a key partner in our journey, and we are grateful for their ongoing support as we continue to grow and succeed in the construction industry," said Jimmy Morris, Jr., the Owner and Managing Member of Morris Builders, LLC.

Additionally, the networking opportunities facilitated by the Southeast SBTRC has opened doors to new partnerships and collaborations, directly contributing to business growth. Overall, the SBTRC's support has strengthened the firm's market position, increased their competitiveness, and laid a solid foundation for continued success.

www.morrisbuildersllc.com ● (334) 365-6306 ● 702 Commerce Court Suite B Prattville, AL 36066

Article provided by Southeast Regional Small Business Transportation Resource Center



WITI HIGHLIGHTS

Empowering Pathways in the Transportation Industry



Megan Roberts, WITI Intern 2024

WITI Intern Excels at St. Louis Lambert Airport

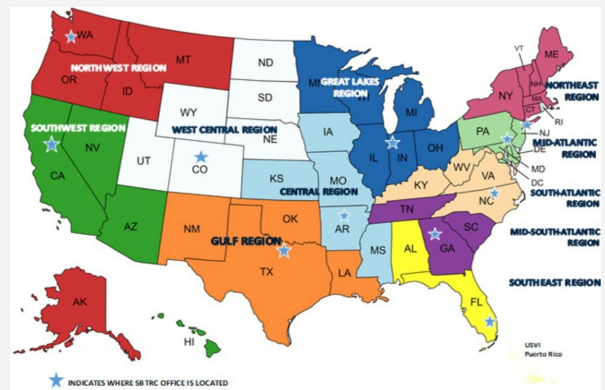
Megan Roberts is currently completing her Bachelors in Business Management, and is expected to graduate in May 2025. This summer, she embarked on an opportunity to intern for the St. Louis Lambert Airport Business Diversity Development (BDD) office as part of their [Women & Girls in Transportation Initiative \(WITI\) program](#). Earlier this year, Megan attended the new Central Region SBTRC Ribbon Cutting where she heard about the WITI program and opportunities at St. Louis Lambert Airport. This event was the first time she was exposed to the transportation industry as a career pathway, hearing of Rhonda Hamm-Niebruegge, St. Louis Lambert Airport Director’s personal career path.

During Megan’s 6-week internship with the BDD office, she worked under Francois Lyles-Wiggins, Assistant Airport Director and along with other Contract Compliance officers. She gained valuable experience working with the BDD office, receiving hands-on practical experience to review and process firms’ submissions for the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBEs)/ Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) program. One of the key objectives of the DBE Program is to certify, ready, willing and able small businesses to ensure they are equipped for participation on federally funded contracts in an effort to level the playing field for small businesses to compete in the transportation industry. She was exposed to the office’s extensive work, and had the opportunity to attend conferences and events. She also received DBE/ ACDBE certification training with the National Highway Institute (NHI), which was helpful when processing certification application under the supervision of Ms. Lyles-Wiggins.

Megan’s summer internship at the St. Louis Lambert Airport was a worthwhile experience she did not want tot come to an end. Currently, she has returned to college for her Fall semester, yet aims to join the office when she completes her degree next Spring.

REACH OUT TO YOUR SBTRC

The U.S. DOT Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) established the [Small Business Transportation Resource Centers \(SBTRCs\)](#) as a network of grantees to work closely with the transportation contracting community and other technical assistance providers to serve small and disadvantaged, transportation-related businesses. These centers provide technical assistance to small businesses to build their capacity in order to become more competitive when bidding on USDOT procurement opportunities and federally-funded contracts.



WHAT'S IN YOUR TOOLBOX

The Tools Your Small Business Needs to Know



Grant Resources Available for Technical Assistance

U.S. DOT established the [Thriving Communities](#) program to provide technical assistance and capacity building resources to improve and foster thriving communities through transportation improvements. This initiative launched a new online portal called the [DOT Navigator](#) to help communities understand the best ways to apply for grants, and to plan for and deliver transformative infrastructure projects and services. To learn about what money is available, check out potential options on the [Overview of DOT Funding and Financing](#) webpage.

Small Business Technical Assistance Support



Check out all the essential tools for small businesses on the [OSDBU Resources and Tools](#) page. Learn more about the tools, resources and programs with our federal partners, the [Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) and [Minority Business Development Agency](#) (MBDA). The SBA provides free or low-cost [local assistance](#) in an array of technical centers, financial opportunities, and programs for small businesses. MBDA invests in a national network of MBDA [Business Centers](#) and [Federal Procurement Centers](#) which offer customized business development and industry-focused services to provide greater access to capital, contracts and markets.

Don't forget to talk with our [DOT Small Business Specialists](#) in each Operating Administration whose primary role is to serve as small businesses advocates. Our Procurement Assistance Division works closely with each of these specialists to ensure that adequate procurement opportunities are made available to small businesses.

Meet with OSDBU on the Road or Virtually



Attend an upcoming virtual event on our [Connections Marketplace Platform](#), which features an online community, roundtable sessions, and business match-making services with our DOT Operating Administrations.

Join the OSDBU team at one of our upcoming small business contracting symposiums to learn more about the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law opportunities in your region, navigating procurements within the region and federally, receiving technical and financial resources, and meeting one-on-one with procurement professionals and other stakeholders. To get all the info on upcoming events, please [subscribe to our listserv](#) for updates.