



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts in TRB's Technical Activities Division

Screenshot: TRB staff

TANISHA HALL

The author is the principal and CEO of Fairpointe Planning, LLC, Nashville, Tennessee.

Above: Traceé Strum-Gilliam (pictured) and Gloria Jeff lead a virtual meeting of the Standing Committee on Equity and Transportation, with a discussion on Federal Highway Administration resources as well as the U.S. DOT ROUTES program.

The 176 standing committees in TRB's Technical Activities Division (TAD) identify, facilitate, and share research and information related to transportation. TAD carries out activities on behalf of TRB sponsors and the transportation community via its 5,000-plus volunteers who serve on standing committees, subcommittees, councils, and task forces overseen by TRB staff.

These committees address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in countless ways, including efforts to diversify their membership and leadership, practices that create a welcoming environment for newcomers, involvement in TRB projects that focus on DE&I-related issues, and engagement with various transportation agencies. Efforts of three of these committees and those of the Young Members Coordinating Council are profiled. These profiles represent a sample of the many actions that committees across TRB are taking to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in their discipline and their committees.

Standing Committee on Equity and Transportation

Chaired by Gloria Jeff and Traceé Strum-Gilliam, the Standing Committee on Equity and Transportation is one of the most diverse TRB standing committees—not only in participation by minorities and women, but also in members' location, age, ability, and skill set, as well as among practitioners, researchers, and public- and private-sector workers. Jeff and Strum-Gilliam believe this diversity is due to the committee intentionally seeking out diverse members and friends based on their broad TRB network and their philosophy that any friend or member has the opportunity to contribute to committee activities if they are willing to work—not basing member opportunities on previous career experience or accomplishments.

Jeff and Strum-Gilliam believe that the Equity and Transportation Committee is very welcoming, uses its friends a great deal, and provides an entry point to those

who may not have a natural entry point to other committees.

Originally, the committee was called the Environmental Justice in Transportation Committee and focused on research related to communities and environmental justice (EJ) issues. In 2020, the committee was reconstituted so that it could expand, allowing it to engage with a broader range of concentration areas in the TRB structure. In addition, the committee considers transportation's impact on peoples' lives in the past, present, and future and ensures that its research encompasses not only EJ-protected populations but also marginalized and disadvantaged populations as a whole.

As Strum-Gilliam explains, historically, EJ practitioners focused only on EJ in terms of activities, equity analyses, and community impact assessments, and less on the impacts on people's daily lives.

As a result of several conferences held in the 1990s that targeted transportation research issues related to the African-American community, Jeff has sought to communicate that EJ in transportation is a broader issue that includes effects on targeted populations from transportation investments—like the effects of diesel pollution on disadvantaged neighborhoods when highways are built through those neighborhoods.

Looking forward, committee members are planning Conference on Advancing Transportation Equity in September 2021. Examples of topics that will be considered include the impacts of connected and automated vehicles on communities of color, as well as of the increased truck traffic caused by expanded port facilities. A representative from the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials is involved with the conference planning committee,

adds Jeff—an example of outreach the committee has done with organizations that represent minority communities.

One initiative the committee wants to propose at its next meeting is to survey state departments of transportation (DOTs) about how they are responding to social justice questions. As Jeff explains, some DOTs are very thoughtful and have action plans for responding to equity issues. In contrast, others see themselves only as engineering organizations and focus only on Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation. Jeff expresses concern that some DOTs' commitment to increasing their workforce diversity involves focusing only on entry-level driver positions, not management positions.

A challenge the committee aims to address is finding researchers to study topics related to transportation equity and ensuring they have forums to present their work. The committee also communicates the need to make transportation equity an integrated part of community planning—whether urban, suburban, or rural.

Standing Committee on Women and Gender in Transportation

Formerly the Women's Issues in Transportation Committee, the Standing Committee on Women and Gender in Transportation illuminates the importance of gender differences in all aspects of transportation.

The committee was born out of a safety and data committee, and over the past four decades has expanded its work beyond gender differences in crash risks to gender differences in travel behavior, travel preferences, and attitudes; crash risks and outcomes; responses to the construction and operation of various transportation and freight vehicles; concerns about safety and personal security (crime and harassment) in all transportation modes; responses to transportation and related public policies; and experiences in the transportation labor force.

Committee members attribute their success in expanding the group's work in part to a growing and diverse community of members and friends engaged in the



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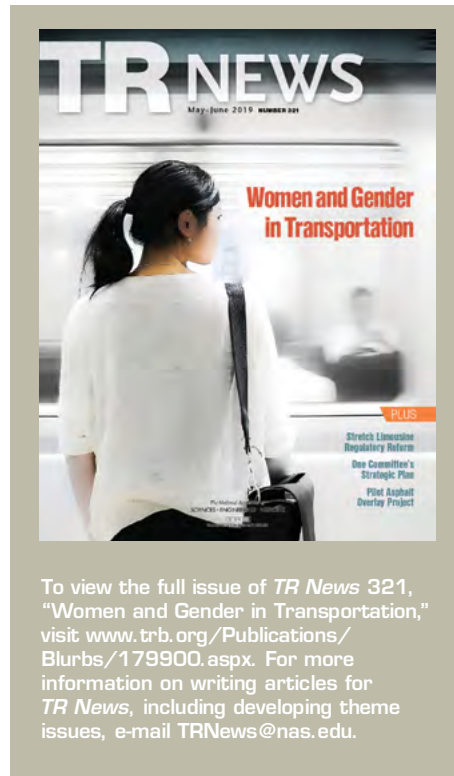
With Strum-Gilliam (at left), Jeff (at right) notes that, by surveying state DOTs on their social justice initiatives, the Equity and Transportation Committee hopes to address the differing levels of commitment to workplace diversity among transportation agencies.

committee's activities. Their experiences and perspectives help shape the committee's priorities and transfer knowledge throughout the TRB community and beyond. To create an inclusive environment for its members and friends, the committee has taken the following steps:

- Maintain the philosophy that all are welcome and encouraged to volunteer—the committee doesn't differentiate between members and friends.
- Dedicate a significant portion of its annual committee meeting agenda to activities that foster connections, especially those that allow participants to connect with and learn from each other and are structured to enable all voices to be heard.
- Ensure that committee membership reflects a variety of voices by including a mix of geographical, gender, education, employment, and age perspectives.
- Have fun! Committee meeting traditions that foster an inviting environment include: ice-breakers, group photos, and covering the table with chocolate treats for everyone to enjoy.

The committee coordinates various activities to engage, inform, and inspire students and practitioners interested in women and gender in transportation. One of the most recent efforts was the May–June 2019 theme issue of *TR News*, “Women and Gender in Transportation.” The committee developed this issue to explore such topics as the negative effects of women's inequitable transportation access on the global economy; women and transit; a case study from Austria on women's travel constraints; and the challenges that minority, low-income women face as pedestrians and bicyclists.

In 2019, the committee sponsored the International Conference on Women's Issues in Transportation. The conference—the sixth in a series that began in 1978—focused on women's issues related to all aspects of travel and transportation and brought together scholars, practitioners, policy analysts, and public officials from around the globe to explore women's



unique transportation perspectives, challenges, achievements, and opportunities. A group of conference participants subsequently wrote a Transportation Research Circular that summarized conference

presentations and discussions. The publication, *Transportation Research Circular E-C268: Insights, Inclusion, and Impact—Framing the Future for Women in Transportation*, is available on TRB's website.

Standing Committee on Native American Transportation Issues

Created in 2001, the Standing Committee on Native American Transportation Issues focuses on research and practice pertaining to transportation issues on or near tribal lands and communities and tribal historical and cultural properties. Tribal transportation issues include all modes moving people and goods from one place to another; relationships and processes at relevant agencies at the tribal, state, federal, regional, and local levels; and the development, planning, administration, coordination, and implementation of transportation laws, policies, plans, programs, and projects.

With such a broad scope of transportation issues, the committee seeks to maintain a balanced membership to reflect tribal, federal, state, and local governments, in addition to members who are Native American and who represent



Photo: Risdon Photography

Members of what is now called the Standing Committee on Women and Gender in Transportation plan the agenda of the 2019 International Conference on Women's Issues in Transportation. Presentations from that conference later appeared in not only a *Transportation Research Circular* but also in a theme issue of *TR News*.

non-Native businesses and organizations. In its leadership, three of the past five committee chairs and co-chairs have been women, and four of five past chairs were Native Americans enrolled in a tribe.

The Native American Transportation Issues Committee has focused on outreach and accessibility to Native American transportation organizations and events. Members plan the National Tribal Transportation Conference, and since 2017, the committee has organized its mid-year meeting to coincide with that event. Also, the committee has presented to the Tribal Transportation Program Coordinating Committee, which is the advisory group to FHWA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, concerning the Tribal Transportation Program.

The committee's TRB projects have included the following:

- The September–October 2014 theme issue of *TR News*, "Transportation in Tribal Lands: Challenges and Initiatives"
- *NCHRP Synthesis 366: Tribal Transportation Programs*
- *NCHRP Report 690: A Guidebook for Successful Communication, Cooperation, and Coordination Strategies Between*

Transportation Agencies and Tribal Communities

- *TCRP Report 154: Developing, Enhancing, and Sustaining Tribal Transit Services—A Guidebook*
- *Transportation Research Circular E-C039: Conference on Transportation Improvements—Experiences Among Tribal, Local, State, and Federal Governments*

The committee engaged proactively with other TRB committees that reflect the interests and challenges facing Native American communities and practitioners. At the 2020 TRB Annual Meeting, the committee sponsored sessions related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and human trafficking, continuing this planning and engagement for future webinars, sessions, and research statements.

Native American cultural and archaeological sites are located across the United States and are vulnerable to impacts from transportation projects. Protecting and managing these sites becomes crucial when ground-disturbing construction activity occurs, as well as in planning and locating infrastructure. Along with the Committee on Historic and Archeological



To view the full issue of *TR News* 294, "Transportation in Tribal Lands," visit www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/171622.aspx.



Photo: Risdon Photography

Ron Hall (far left) delivers a presentation at a 2008 meeting of the Native American Transportation Issues Committee.

Preservation in Transportation, the Native American Transportation Issues Committee established a Joint Subcommittee on Native American Historic and Archeological Preservation.

One issue of interest is incorporating the transportation research interests and practices of the international Indigenous community. The impact of colonization on Indigenous people is a global phenomenon, with common trademarks of land and resource deprivation, underdeveloped infrastructure, and socioeconomic disparities. Significant opportunities for research and practice within Indigenous communities are likely to emerge with additional research and collaboration. Although there is no current linkage to the international Indigenous transportation community within TRB, the committee hopes to foster those connections and expand its dialogue to include that community.

Research on the current Native American transportation workforce is another area of high interest. Tribal programs must confront the pending retirement of an aging workforce and adapt to new technologies along with their state and local peers. There is vast diversity within tribal contexts regarding land (owner-

ship, use, jurisdiction, size, legal status, and more), governmental structures, demographics, geography, and climate. The tasks and expertise required to manage and operate a transportation program effectively varies significantly from tribe to tribe. Accurate data on the tribal transportation workforce are not readily available, leading to a systemic void of policy and analysis to develop resources that adequately support successful tribal programs.

Young Members Coordinating Council

The Young Members Coordinating Council (YMCC) serves transportation professionals ages 35 or younger advancing the national transportation research agenda. Key goals include

- **Involvement.** To provide opportunities for young professionals to get actively involved with TRB.
- **Resources.** To offer targeted resources geared for and by young professionals in the form of technical sessions, events, and guides.
- **Connections.** To facilitate networking opportunities and connect young professionals with TRB committees and with peers from around the world.
- **Representation.** To serve as young professionals' liaison to and from TRB leadership and the research community to address issues of importance to young members.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FOCUS

Although YMCC was established with the mission of including younger generations of transportation professionals in TRB, the council strives to reflect the diversity it advocates for all of TRB. For instance, since the council's inception, three out of five chairs have been female, with many subcommittees led by women and representatives of different races and ethnicities.



Photo: Risdon Photography

Nikola Ivanov (left) guides a meeting of the Young Members Coordinating Council in early 2020. Ivanov and Alison Conway (second from left) are former chairs of the council.

MENTORING AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES

YMCC has implemented several inclusion initiatives targeting young professionals, focusing on providing a benefit to both the young professionals and TRB standing committees. The council's subcommittees have been running successful mentoring programs that connect young professionals to seasoned veterans and peers across TRB, offering the following opportunities:

- Two-way knowledge transfer,
- Career growth and guidance,
- Better integration into TRB activities, and
- TRB Annual Meeting navigation.

YMCC has been working with TRB staff and group, section, and committee chairs to encourage the integration of young professionals in TRB activities. This work created dedicated young member slots on standing committees and facilitated young professional engagement in organizing sessions, workshops, and specialty conferences; drafting research needs; administering committee websites; and developing informational resources. The council continues to work with standing committees to ensure that

everyone feels welcome to committee and subcommittee meetings to share their expertise and enthusiasm to help committees achieve their goals.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

YMCC actively works with TRB leadership, including those within the Technical Activities Council, Executive Committee, and senior TRB staff, to provide input to TRB's strategic direction, focusing on initiatives of importance to young professionals and future generations of transportation leaders. Those initiatives often include efforts to continue diversifying the transportation industry workforce and engaging under-represented groups. With more and more emerging transportation professionals attending TRB's Annual Meeting and becoming involved in TRB's committee structure, YMCC will continue to be a crucial link to their involvement and professional development.

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