

Equity and Inclusion

OVERVIEW FOR THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, 3/2021

VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

Title VI Program Including Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

AOT has updated and implemented Title VI (Civil Rights Act of 1964) program plans specific to the federal aid program areas within the agency and with external transportation partners to ensure comprehensive Title VI compliance with FHWA and FTA regulations.

Title VI law is applicable and relevant to all Agency of Transportation programs, services, and activities as a recipient of federal funds and assistance. We have updated and approved Title VI Plans for FHWA, FTA, and FMCSA, as well as a Title VI Policy, Title VI Assurances, and Title VI Toolkits for subrecipients, and extensive LEP resources and links for translation services.

Employment Diversity in Highway Construction (EDHC) FY2020 Accomplishments

- Workforce training and support to 78 women and minorities who entered or advanced careers in Highway Construction. Program components included CDL training, on-the-job training.
- Fourteen on-the-job trainees received paid training on 12 construction projects in 7 skilled work classifications, including bridge construction, carpentry, Field Engineer, Construction Supervisor, and Traffic Coordinator.
- Fifty women and minorities participated in CDL training. Since 1999, we have assisted more than 785 women and minorities obtain their CDLs, with funding from FHWA.
- Additional training subsidies year-round for a diverse range of safety and technical skills, including welding, OSHA training, heavy equipment, project supervision, etc.
- Supportive services to remove barriers and build career ladders, including vouchers for safety equipment and tools, career counseling, pre-employment readiness training, steel-toed boots, job referrals, and post-program support.

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and Small Business Programs

- The DBE program is mandated by USDOT to encourage participation by firms that are at least 51% owned and controlled by women and minorities. AOT is the lead certifying agency in SOV.
- The AOT Small Business Program is a self-certification program to encourage all small businesses to actively participate in AOT contracting and procurement opportunities.
- Both programs are free. Participants receive marketing through online directories and weekly notification of contracting and training opportunities.
- Women and minority business owners accounted for almost 14% of federally-funded Agency contract awards in FY 2020.
- AOT collaborates with ACCD, BGS, and other SOV and federal agencies to provide networking, training, and matchmaker events to promote government contracting to Vermont businesses.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at AOT and with Contractors and Subrecipients

- AOT mainstreams Civil Rights in hiring, recruitment, onboarding, training, employee development, and outreach.
- Ouch Training and the AOT Respectful Workplace Commitment: In 2019, the Civil Rights delivered Workplace Civility, Unconscious Bias, and Ouch Training to 1,245 Employees.
- All new hires receive comprehensive onboarding, including an introduction to AOT's Leadership Team, our Resource Ambassadors, and training on Workplace Civility, Unconscious Bias, and Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment.
- Civil Rights has delivered similar training to the Agency's contractors and sub-recipients, including public transit, towns, and municipalities.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at AOT and with Contractors and Subrecipients

- AOT uses a proactive interview and hiring process:
 - Neutral parties (Civil Rights or Human Resources) on interview panels
 - Competency-based card sorts for position requirements, job specs, interview questions, classification, and candidate selection
 - Mandatory interviews for eligible candidates for groups that have been historically under-represented in the workforce
 - Use of a Hiring Justification and Concurrence Process for candidate selection
- To build a strong State of Vermont diversity, equity, and inclusion network, AOT serves on a broad range of councils, task forces, and teams to share best practices, tools, and resources.
- AOT has taken the lead in youth outreach, training, and employment, with numerous school to work participants, including job shadows, Challenged Based Learning students, facilities tours, and mock interviews. Civil Rights spearheads the youth outreach program.

VTrans Training Center (VTTC)

- **VTTC's mission is to promote a culture of workplace respect, civility, and inclusivity throughout the workforce lifecycle.**
- **Leadership** is key to creating a culture of inclusivity and workplace civility in order to elevate the issues, set the tone, and create clear performance expectations.
 - AOT Executive Staff members are exceptional role models of civility and inclusion.
 - AOT Managers and Supervisors are trained and empowered to set standards and expectations.
- **Onboarding, Performance Evaluations, and Exit Interviews:**
 - New employee and new supervisor onboarding training sets the expectation for civility and inclusion.
 - Employee and supervisor civility and inclusion expectations are reviewed in all annual performance evaluations.
 - DHR facilitates an agencywide exit interview process to identify trends.

VTrans Training Center (VTTC)

Employee Development Programs:

- **All employee development programs are reviewed by Civil Rights to ensure inclusion**
 - Pathway to Supervision – develops future inclusive supervisors
 - Transportation Leadership Institute – grows inclusive emerging leaders
 - Interviews and Hiring – uncovers bias to create fair and impartial interviews
 - Strength-Based Coaching and Development Groups and Individuals – reinforces the benefits of differences as an organizational, team, and individual strength
 - Individualized Support: mentoring, individual development plans, job shadowing, rotation programs, decentralized reallocation – provides inclusive support for individual career pathways and future development
- **Additional supporting programs and practices:**
 - Appropriate contracting processes and contract language to ensure diversity in contracted training vendors and an expectation regarding inclusivity.
 - Korn Ferry – competency mapping to prepare interview committee to support diversity and inclusion
 - Strategic Workforce Committees – employee representation from all levels of AOT, facilitated by VTTC in partnership with Civil Rights to identify workforce practices that are inclusive, and employee empowered

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

- **Website**

- Google Translate function offers automatic translation of all pages.
- Translations of form descriptions allow people to find forms without translating the entire website. This work was completed after consulting with the U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants – Vermont (USCRI-VT).

- **Exams**

- Standard learner permit exams are available in 10 languages (Arabic, Burmese, English, French, Kirundi, Nepali, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili), including audio for both in-person and at-home testing.
- Use of interpreters on standard road tests is now available and was piloted in South Burlington beginning October 2020.
- Partnered with USCRI-VT to translate license/permit application, non-driver ID application, and VT Residency Certification form. Annually review languages in which forms and exams are offered and expand if necessary.

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

- **Branch Offices**
 - Ubiduo devices available at all branch offices to improve communication for deaf or hard-of-hearing customers.
 - Signage advertises availability of interpretation services for assistance with in-person transactions at each customer service counter and exam location.
- **Roadside Interactions**
 - Visor cards are available to help people who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate with law enforcement officers if they are pulled over while driving. Partnered with the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living and Vermont State Police to create the cards.
 - Use of contracted interpretation services for interactions with motorists at roadside.
- Gender-neutral option available for driver's licenses
- Modified license forms to clarify that applicants for a driver privilege card are not required to answer questions about citizenship

What's Next?

Efforts to advance

- Inform the Legislative Committees on Transportation about the current and future work of the Agency in equity and inclusion in transportation (Spring 2021)
- Expand the AOT Equity Impact Leadership Committee to ensure broad participation across Agency Leadership (Spring 2021)
- Engage with Federal Highway Administration, USDOT, AASHTO, NASTO and other national peer groups regarding best practices for equity and inclusion in transportation (Spring 2021)
- Meet with State of Vermont agencies that are further along the implementation spectrum to learn from their experiences (Spring 2021)

What's Next?

Efforts to advance

- Assure that all AOT planning and project development staff and consultants are aware of and trained in the use of the [AOT Engaging the Public Guidance](#) (2017), specifically the use of Appendix C Equity Impact Worksheet & Maps (Spring/Summer 2021)
- Revise and update the AOT Engaging the Public Guidance prior to beginning training in its use. (Fall/Winter 2021/2022)
- “Engaging your Audience with Finesse” course update to include training on how to assess the community being presented to in order to support heightened inclusion (Fall 2021)
- Expand the use of interpreters on road tests throughout the state (delayed implementation due to COVID-19 pandemic) (2021)

What's Next?

Efforts to advance

- Develop an equity screening procedure/criteria to incorporate into the VTrans' Project Selection & Prioritization Process (VPSP2) (Summer/Fall 2021)
- Use targeted engagement on construction projects in areas serving historically underrepresented populations (Shelburne Street Roundabout, Burlington; Amtrak to Burlington, Burlington; Champlain Parkway, Burlington; and other projects yet to be identified) to inform and enhance current best practices (2021 Construction Season)
- Municipal partners training to further support diversity (Fall 2021)
- Consideration of additional inclusionary language for future contracts (Fall 2021)

What's Next?

Efforts to advance

- Creation of an Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Technical Advisory Committee to review policies, procedures, practices, and trainings (Summer 2021)
- Undertake an agencywide Inventory of Current Equity practices and programs and a Gap Analysis to determine how to best address implementing Equity Impact Assessment tools (such as the Equity Impact Assessment form) and practices in Agency training, programs, and projects (Summer/Fall 2021)
- Develop an Agency Equity Workplan to implement outcomes of Gap Analysis (Fall 2021)
- Commence implementation of Agency Equity Workplan (Winter 2021 and beyond)