

STRIDE

Southeastern Transportation Research,
Innovation, Development and Education Center

Technology Transfer Final Report

STRIDE Project E5

**A Framework to Promote Diversity and Inclusion
in Workforce Development in the Southeast States**

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University of Florida

March 2023

THE STRIDE CENTER

The STRIDE Center is the 2016 USDOT Region 4 (Southeast) University Transportation Center (UTC) housed at the University of Florida Transportation Institute (UFTI). Our mission is to develop novel strategies for Reducing Congestion. The Center has nine partners, representing seven states in the Southeastern U.S. The UFTI and its partners in the STRIDE Center are recognized leaders at state, regional, national, and international levels. The STRIDE Center is focused on assembling and integrating research projects throughout the region in a way that maximizes contributions to solving current and future transportation problems as well as strengthening expertise and developing new technologies. For more information see <https://stride.ce.ufl.edu/>.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP AND STAKEHOLDERS

This work was sponsored by a contract from the Southeastern Transportation Research, Innovation, Development and Education Center (STRIDE), a Regional University Transportation Center sponsored by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's University Transportation Centers Program.

1. Project Overview

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the current dynamics of diversity within the transportation industry, it is necessary to consider three key areas. Firstly, it is important to define what diversity means for the transportation workforce. Secondly, it is crucial to examine how different agencies, such as Departments of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and Transit Agencies, incorporate diversity and inclusion into their business goals. Finally, it is essential to identify the barriers that transportation agencies face when it comes to diversifying their workforce and supporting the advancement of a diverse group of employees within their organizations. By exploring these areas in depth, it is possible to develop effective strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion within the transportation industry. The lack of workforce diversity has made it challenging for transportation agencies to incorporate resiliency into their long-term plans effectively.

This research project aimed to develop a framework for creating a diverse and inclusive workforce environment in transportation agencies in the southeast region of the United States. The project identified gaps in workforce diversity, predicted future needs, and outlined the role that various organizations can play in recruiting, training, and maintaining a diverse skillful workforce. The goal was to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the transportation workforce, which would ultimately lead to a more resilient transportation system in the region. The research team 1) conducted a systematic literature review, 2) developed a list of notable practices, and 3) designed a leadership workshop for transportation practitioners and policymakers. The workshop aimed to provide insights on barriers to diversifying the workforce, inform leaders about the needs and concerns of underrepresented groups, emphasize interdisciplinary skills in addressing transportation needs, and develop strategies to diversify and support diverse employees within public agencies. The workshop was advertised through UFTI newsletters, and 64 transportation professionals from across the country were registered.

2. Research Goals

- Project focuses on the Southeast region but recognizes diversity as a nationwide issue.
- Notable practices from across the country considered for diversity strategies and tools.
- The project aims to identify gaps and provide a DEI framework for transportation agencies' diversity and inclusion programs in the context of southeast states.

3. Findings

The transportation industry has made progress in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workforce. Recruiting and retaining the workforce reflect different images in different contexts, and rural areas face more recruiting barriers than urban areas. To diversify the workforce and promote career mobility for diverse groups of employees in transportation agencies, apprenticeship programs, internships, innovative recruitment methods, and quantifying total compensation should be adopted. It is also essential to make prospective employees aware of the valuable benefits and job security that come with DOT employment, especially highlighting unique opportunities for younger generations. Finally, transportation agencies need to recover the public's view of the transportation industry, promote their projects, and show how they impact communities' everyday lives through different platforms, including social media, to reach younger generations. Transportation agencies in the Southeast need to have a regional approach to workforce development and build strong relationships with neighboring states to

collectively solve existing workforce issues. The lessons learned from this project provide Southeast agencies with a framework to diversify the workforce and promote different groups within the workforce. Additionally, neighboring states can learn from each other by sharing innovative practices. Ultimately, implementing these practices will lead to a workforce that reflects the communities it serves, providing a better transportation experience for everyone.

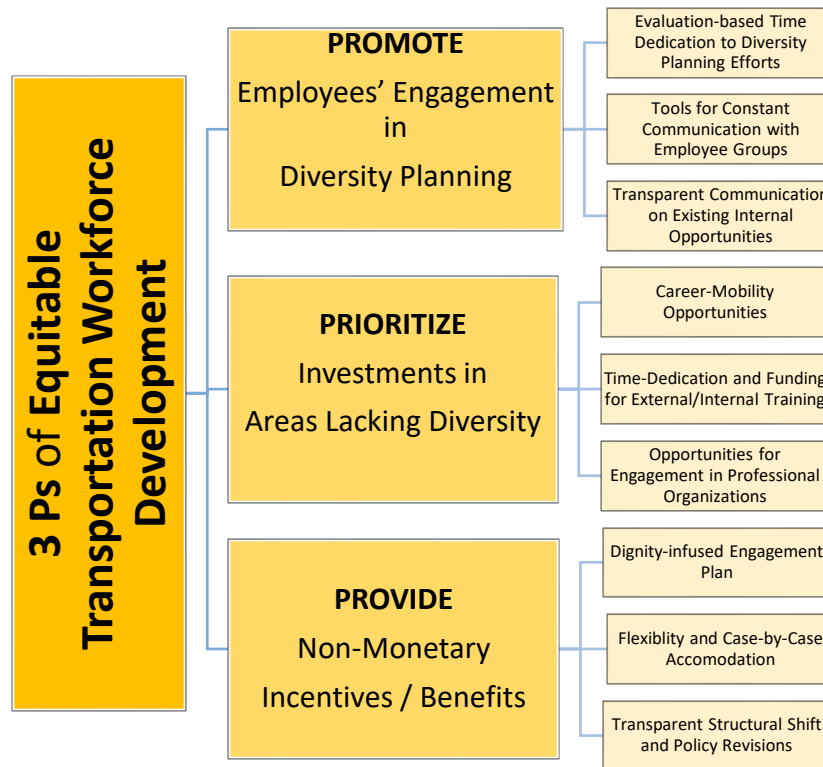
4. Performance Metrics

Metric	# Completed
OUTPUTS	
Product(s): Number of new or improved tools, technologies, products, methods, practices, and processes created or improved	1
Technical Report: Number of client-based technical reports published	1 (STRIDE Final Report)
OUTCOMES	
Body of Knowledge: Number of trainings for transportation professionals	2
Professionals Trained: Number of professionals participating in trainings	202
IMPACTS	
Stakeholders: Number of stakeholders you met with to encourage adoption or implementation of product(s)	18
Adoption/Implementation: Number of incidences outputs of research have been implemented or adopted	0

5. Product

1) Webinar: How to Build Diversity + Enhance Inclusion within the Transportation Workforce

Getting the right people to do the job in transportation agencies is crucial, specifically in the aftermath of a crisis (such as a hurricane). Understanding communities' needs and addressing their concerns requires a diverse set of skills, perspectives, and lived experiences. This webinar introduces tools and techniques to support diverse groups of employees within the transportation workforce and provides guidance for the public and private sectors. Recording: https://youtu.be/NNy_2070TeU



3 Ps of Equitable Transportation Workforce Development (Self-elaboration)

6. Who benefits/will benefit from your product(s)?

- Departments of Transportation
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Cities & Counties
- Educational Centers
- LTAP Centers
- Federal Highway Administration
- Other Federal Agencies

7. Body of Knowledge & Professionals Trained

- 1) TRB Women's Issues in Transportation Workshop –Mehri Mohebbi (UF), Florida Di Ciommo (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid), Shamsunnahar Yasmin (Queensland University of Technology) presented "3Ps of Equitable Workforce Development" on September 2022. (150 registrants, virtual)
- 2) STRIDE Webinar: "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Leadership Webinar: Techniques to Diversify & Support Transportation Workforce" presented by Mehri M. Mohebbi, Ph.D. (Transportation Equity (TE) Program Director, University of Florida), Virginia P. Sisiopiku, Ph.D., FITE (TREND Lab Director, University of Alabama at Birmingham), and Dimitra Michalaka, Ph.D., P.E. (Associate Professor, The Citadel) on May 9, 2022. (34 Attendees)

- 3) STRIDE Webinar: Mehri Mohebbi (UF), Virginia P. Sisiopiku (UAB), and Dimitra Michalaka (Citadel) presented “How to Build Diversity + Enhance Inclusion within the Transportation Workforce” on March 2023. https://youtu.be/NNy_2O70TeU (18 Attendees, 34 views)

8. Journal Publications, Conference Presentations, & Posters

- 1) Poster Presentation, Tools & Techniques to Diversify the Transit Workforce and Support Diverse Groups of Employees, Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, January 2023, Washington, D.C. (This project was supported with STRIDE and a grant from USDOT through Mineta Transportation Institute)
- 2) Oral Presentation, Tools to Diversify and Support Diverse Groups within Transit Industry, October 2023, World Road Association (PIARC), Prague, Czech Republic.

9. Stakeholder Engagement

STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	
Stakeholder(s)	Mr. Greg Slay, Staff Director Capital Region TPA, Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	
Stakeholder(s)	Ms. Beth Alden, Staff Director Hillsborough TPO, Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Ms. Aileen Bouclé Staff Director Miami-Dade TPO, Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	

Stakeholder(s)	Mr. Gary Huttman, Staff Director MetroPlan Orlando, Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce Get connected to the MPOAC for further conversation
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	
Stakeholder(s)	Mr. Gregory Stuart, Staff Director Broward MPO, Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce Get connected to Cecilia Woodruff with Augusta Planning & Development https://www.augustaga.gov/2105/Title-VI-Program
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	
Stakeholder(s)	Mr. Donald II, Odie, Executive Staff ARTS/ Metropolitan Planning Organization, Augusta, Georgia	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Lynda Temples, Principal Transportation Planner Columbus Planning Department (GA)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Narrative Description Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/10/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Mr. Phill Conrad, Transportation Planner Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization (NC)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce Equity training on 10/12/2021 for all City of Raleigh employees
Date of Activity	11/10/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	
Stakeholder(s)	Sara Akimoto, Office Manager NC Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	

STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	
Stakeholder(s)	Tracy Manning, Executive Assistant Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (NC)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Lance Estep, AICP, Principal Planner Appalachian Council of Governments (SC)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/10/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Daniel Brock, danielb@bcdcog.com Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Government (SC)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Ms. Shelly Hazle, Senior Policy Advisor Greater Nashville Regional Council (TN)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Kate Horton, PLA, ASLA Transportation Planner Memphis MPO (TN)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	11/21/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	

Stakeholder(s)	Doug Burton, Title VI Coordinator Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	12/13/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email Communication	
Stakeholder(s)	Susan Doran, Kingsport MTPO (TN)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	12/13/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Jessica Nichols, Workforce Manager Central Mississippi Planning and Development District (MS)	
STRIDE rep.	Mehri “Mehrsa” Mohebbi	Communication on internal efforts (task force, committee, or initiative) on promoting diversity within workforce
Date of Activity	12/13/2021	
Type of Activity	other - please describe	
Location	Email	
Stakeholder(s)	Paul Gavin, Public Involvement/Title VI Coordinator, Gulf Regional Planning Commission (MS)	

The research team also contacted the DOTs in the Southeast on 10/18/2021 and 11/21/2021 and communicated in regard to their ED&I efforts related to the workforce.

10. Adoption/Implementation

Webinar: How to Build Diversity + Enhance Inclusion within the Transportation Workforce

This training product is ready for adoption by public and private transportation agencies. The training materials provided in this webinar is guiding the development of equity planning for transportation agencies. The PI of the project is introducing the framework developed through this study and the training materials to professional organizations she is involved in.

11. Broader Impacts

3 Ps of Equitable Transportation Workforce Development guides transportation agencies in three following areas:

- 1) promoting employees’ engagement in diversity planning;
- 2) prioritizing investments in areas lacking diversity; and
- 3) providing non-monetary incentives and benefits.

Ultimately, these practices will lead to a workforce that truly represents the communities it serves, leading to a better transportation experience for everyone.