



Tribal Corridor Management Planning: Model, Case Study, And Guide For Caltrans District I

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MTI Project 2604

June 2011

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This guide was created to help the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District I personnel and members of the North Coast Tribal Transportation Commission to develop interpretive “tribal transportation corridors” along stretches of state highways that cross tribal lands in Northern California. By incorporating elements such as tribal symbols, informational kiosks, native plantings, bilingual signage, and other features along state highways, travelers will experience a greater sense of place when traveling through tribal lands and will gain a greater awareness and appreciation for the history, culture, and vitality of these communities.

This report presents a guide to tribal corridor management planning and a model for the segment of California State Route 96 that lies within the boundaries of the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation in eastern Humboldt County. The guide also outlines transportation needs such as traffic calming, safety enhancement measures, aesthetic treatments, and strategies for reducing vandalism and maintenance within the proposed tribal corridor.

Study Method

This project employed multidisciplinary research methods, including content analysis of existing corridor management plans; literature review to identify best practices; participant observation; interviews with local stakeholders; focus group interviews with Caltrans personnel; and landscape analysis.

The project team included members of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and other local tribes, community residents and stakeholders, MTI research associates, staff from Caltrans District I, and representatives of other local transportation agencies.

Findings

The authors conclude that whenever Caltrans District I staff and tribal governments understand and communicate difficulties as well as shared common goals for highway operations, progress is significant despite significant geographic and administrative challenges. Tribal representatives, Caltrans staff, and local residents and stakeholders shared enthusiasm for the application of tribal designs and motifs throughout the highway corridor, citing lower

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maintenance costs, reduced incidents of vandalism, increased tourism potential, and aesthetic enhancement as potential benefits. The study identified patterned crosswalks, decorative guardrails, bilingual signage, gateway monuments, and landscaping with native plants, among others, as context-sensitive design elements that would enhance local sense of place while contributing to other corridor management objectives, such as improved public safety and protection of sensitive resources. These recommendations are unique because they emphasize creative solutions that concurrently address multiple concerns – for example, communication strategies that bring Caltrans and tribal organizations into planning activities, or safety infrastructure designed to enhance interpretative opportunities as well as the beauty of the roadway.



Policy Recommendations

The Hoopa Valley case study is intended to serve as a pilot project for future tribal corridor management plans (TCMPs) throughout District I. Therefore, it is one element within a larger endeavor to envision a coordinated and holistic approach to corridor management in tribal territories, one that specifically involves interpretation, design, and context-sensitive solutions.

The report recommends that Caltrans and the tribes seek early and frequent communication and collaboration to overcome these obstacles. Further, the authors identify several examples of non-standard design elements that could be incorporated into highway improvements to enhance local sense of place among residents and travelers.

About the Authors

Joy K. Adams is a Senior Researcher at the headquarters of the Association of American Geographers in Washington, DC. Her research and teaching have focused on the social construction of ethnic and racial identities in the United States, cultural landscapes of North America, heritage tourism, and qualitative methods.

Mary Scoggin is Professor of Anthropology at Humboldt State University, where she has taught anthropology, folklore and Chinese studies since 1998. Related to this work she spent three years as a member of the Humboldt County Association of Governments Citizen Advisory Committee.

To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2604.html