

PRESS RELEASE

Tribal Safety Champions Workshop

Dec. 21, 2015

Southern Plains TTAP Center

The Southern Plains Tribal Technical Assistance Program (SPTTAP) Center held its second Tribal Safety Champions workshop, on November 17-18, 2015 at Aloft Hotel in Oklahoma City for more than 100 attendees.

“We are very pleased to have received our second round of funding from FHWA’s Accelerated Safety Activities Program to continue this event in 2015,” said Karla Sisco, TTAP Program Manager. “It was a great opportunity for the tribes and various safety stakeholders to come together and learn about the latest safety technologies, while they networked and shared ideas and successes.”

In the opening session, Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) Director, Mike Patterson, touted ODOT’s latest safety improvement projects, including cable barrier, smart work zones, and centerline rumble strips. In other opening remarks, Gary Corino, Oklahoma Division, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Administrator, provided information on the Accelerated Innovation Deployment (AID) grant, which allowed for two key High Friction Surface Treatment projects in Oklahoma City. Corino also noted the advances made through the Every Day Counts (EDC) initiatives from FHWA.

Michael Lynn, President of the Oklahoma Tribal Transportation Council and Roads Director for the Cherokee Nation noted the importance of thinking of the safety of family and friends when designing roads and completing transportation projects. Finally, Ed Kirtley, Assistant Dean of Outreach and Extension in the College of Engineering, Technology and Architecture (CEAT) at Oklahoma State University (OSU), offered words of welcome from OSU and words of support for the safety training efforts of the SPTTAP and the LTAP (Local Technical Assistance Program).

The workshop continued with a variety of sessions, including engineering topics, such as *Smarter Work Zones*, *Collecting Crash Data for Road Improvement Projects*, *Data Driven Analysis for Bridge Safety*, *MUTCD*, *High Friction Surface Treatment*, and *Centerline Rumble Strips*, as well as a selection of education sessions, including *A Public Health Approach to Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention*,

Defensive Driving for Youth, DUI Prevention and Education, and Tribal Safety Education Initiatives.

Tuesday's lunch session featured the introduction of SPTTAP's new safety awards. The Tribal Safety Circuit Rider Program created the seven safety awards that are to be given annually. The awards are to highlight the safety efforts throughout the SPTTAP service area and are designed to give honor to individuals and programs for their service and continued efforts for making tribal communities safe. The nomination process included an application, a letter of recommendation, pictures of nominees, and examples of work in the safety field.

Lawrence Robertson, Director, Indian Highway Safety Program, spoke on what it means to be a Safety Champion, and Tabatha Harris, SPTTAP Tribal Safety Circuit Rider, introduced the award winners.

The seven award categories and winners are as follows:

- Tribal Child Passenger Safety Technician of the Year, Sara Bell, Kaw Nation Child Care Development Fund Program
- Tribal Child Passenger Instructor of the Year, Cassandra Herring, Child Passenger Safety Instructor, Oklahoma SAFE KIDS
- Tribal Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Tony Coleman, Chief of the Kaw Nation Police Department
- BIA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Robert Daniel Ashcraft, officer for the Concho BIA Law Enforcement unit
- Local Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Russell Callicoa, a trooper for the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, serving as the #1 DUI Prevention officer
- Safety Champions of the Year, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma
- Safety Champion of the Year, Denea Burgess, Seminole Nation Planner and Program Analyst

Enforcement sessions at the workshop included *ENDUI - The First Year*, *Occupant Protection: Maintaining Our Efforts*, and the *Faces of Impaired Driving*. Captain Ronnie Hampton, Commander, Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, shared a presentation on the serious consequences of impaired driving that reach far beyond the legal and financial ones. Hampton outlined numerous examples of lives permanently impacted because of someone's decision to drive while impaired. He also offered a brief overview of Oklahoma's new texting and driving law.

In the area of emergency management, Richard Jurey, Operations Engineer, FHWA Oklahoma Division, provided an overview of the *Oklahoma SHRP2 Traffic*

Incident Management (TIM) Emergency Responder Training program, with some basic information on how emergency responders can be prepared for traffic issues at a crash scene.

A special session geared at transit personnel, *Distracted Driving for Transit*, was a 2-hour course that offered a certification from the Transportation Safety Institute. The instruction explored driving distractions with a focus on public transportation operations, including distractions within tribal and rural transit and the requirement for vehicle operators to “multi-task.”

The Southern Plains Transportation Center featured a poster session highlighting transportation research projects by students from the University of Oklahoma. Topics covered in the posters included *Motorcycle Crash Causation Study, Incident and Weather Management System, Police Automated Reporting and Information Systems, Intent Communication Between Autonomous Vehicles and Pedestrians, Smart Post Earthquake Bridge Inspection Protocol, and Vehicular Networking for Increased Driver Safety*. Oklahoma University professors, Joseph Havlicek and Ronald Barnes also held a podium session which discussed the significant impact that the OU Center for Intelligent Transportation Systems has had on transportation safety in Oklahoma.

During the Wednesday lunch session, Kenneth Copeland, Regional Programs Manager, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, shared data compiled by the Indian Highway Safety Program that is specific to Native American populations. Traffic fatality categories included impaired driving, no seatbelt usage, and pedestrians. The good news is that Native American traffic fatalities, overall, declined slightly from 2012 to 2013. Copeland attributed those results to the good work that so many tribal, local, state, and federal stakeholders are doing in safety.

Several tribes had the opportunity to discuss their safety initiatives and successes. Richard McCulley, Seminole Nation Transportation Director, talked about the driver safety presentations they are providing to area schools. Chris McCray, Pawnee Nation Transportation Director, shared how the Pawnee Nation used their Tribal Transportation Safety Program Funding to purchase emergency management equipment and strengthen their Emergency Communications Plan. Their integrated system now provides quick, reliable notification; interoperability between emergency responders; increased emergency responder safety; increased accuracy and response to incidents; and it meets the National Incident

Management System (NIMS) standards.

Angela Blind, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Transportation Director, spoke about coordinating with various agencies and groups to reinforce safety messages on bicycles, pedestrians, and seatbelts. The tribe recorded a video to publicize their outreach efforts.

Tom Edwards, Cross Timbers Consulting, and Charley LaSarge, Muscogee Creek Nation, focused on three tribal safety projects, one that has been constructed and two that are in the design phase. The Okemah Pedestrian Bridge is already being utilized as a safety passageway for children to reach school on a daily basis.

Finally, KLJ Consultants, Tonya Tordsen, transportation engineer, and Molly Herrington, government relations, provided a presentation on their successful experiences in assisting tribal clients with TIGER grant applications. The session included information on determining what projects are potential winners, computing benefit/cost analysis, assessing engineered design for safety improvements, preparing for an application, and sharing lessons learned. The pair encouraged grant applicants to touch base with the grantor agency before applying for a grant, so that a relationship can be developed. Participants were also urged to seek support letters and increase the innovation component of their applications.

This year, the Tribal Safety Champions Workshop was held at Aloft Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City, a trendy property, which opened in 2014 in the popular Bricktown area, the entertainment district just east of downtown Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

“The venue provided a perfect backdrop for bringing safety stakeholders together as we push forward initiatives that will make our roads and citizens more safe,” said Sisco.

“The Tribal Safety Champions Workshop allows us to hear and see the safety efforts of our peers,” noted Chris McCray, Pawnee Nation Transportation Manager, “which then helps inspire us to increase and enhance our own safety initiatives.”

To view the presentations from the workshop, go to:

<http://ttap.okstate.edu/events/tribal-safety-champions-workshop-presentations-posted-here>