

December
2024

A Southern California Tribal Transportation and Mobility Oral History Narrative from the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center



Theresa Gregor, Associate Professor, Program in American Indian Studies,
California State University, Long Beach (aka Puvungna)

Tyler Reeb, Executive Director Center for International Trade and
Transportation, California State University, Long Beach

Devin Martinez-Flores, Research Associate, Center for International Trade
and Transportation, California State University Long Beach, GIS StoryMap
Author



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

LONG BEACH

Technical Report Documentation Page

1. Report No. PSR-23-12	2. Government Accession No. N/A	3. Recipient's Catalog No. N/A
4. Title and Subtitle A Southern California Tribal Transportation and Mobility Oral History Narrative from the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center	5. Report Date July 2025	
	6. Performing Organization Code N/A	
7. Author(s) Theresa Gregor, 0009-0001-1189-2249 Tyler Reeb, 0000-0002-2991-4020 Devin Martinez-Flores, 0009-0005-6814-5075	8. Performing Organization Report No. PSR-23-12	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address METRANS Transportation Center University of Southern California University Park Campus, RGL 216 Los Angeles, CA 90089-0626	10. Work Unit No. N/A	
	11. Contract or Grant No. USDOT Grant 69A3551747109	
12. Sponsoring Agency Name and Address U.S. Department of Transportation Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590	13. Type of Report and Period Covered Final report (October 2023 – December 2024)	
	14. Sponsoring Agency Code USDOT OST-R	

15. Supplementary NotesMETRANS | Research ProjectsTribal Oral History StoryMap**16. Abstract**

This project examines the intergovernmental relationship between San Diego County Tribal Nations and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and its development of relationship and practices to prioritize Tribal transportation and mobility needs within the larger regional planning process. SANDAG and Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association (SCTCA) established a formal relationship with Tribal leadership and representation on several key regional committees that provide a platform for Tribal issues to be included in the regional planning process. While this relationship is groundbreaking, this research assesses the collaboration and examines the practices that are most effective to potentially replicate these Native-Local practices in other regions in the Southwest. SANDAG and SCTCA have a viable working relationship, however, we want to know how this relationship can be improved and expanded to support long-term sustainability and resiliency for Tribes in San Diego County.

The research is grounded in a place-based, oral history format that supports Indigenous traditional knowledge formation and current practices within the discipline of American Indian Studies to blend cultural studies methodologies with transportation policy analysis of the overall regional history of transportation development to examine relevant social, political, and cultural issues impacting the lives of First Peoples. Data collection included: 1) Tribal interviews and transcriptions to develop the oral history, 2) Critical review of the history of Southern California Tribal transportation and mobility, and 3) Development of a GIS Story Map of the territory described with transportation corridors, Tribal roads, and other relevant data provided in the oral histories.

17. Key Words

Tribal Nations, Sovereignty, Transportation, Mobility, Engagement, Regional, Oral History, Community Readiness Model

18. Distribution Statement

No restrictions.

19. Security Classif. (of this report)

Unclassified

20. Security Classif. (of this page)

Unclassified

21. No. of Pages

37

22. Price

N/A

Form DOT F 1700.7 (8-72)

Reproduction of completed page authorized

Contents

Technical Report Documentation Page	1
Acknowledgements	5
Abstract	6
Executive Summary	8
Introduction	11
Methodology	11
Place/Land	12
Agency	12
Sovereignty	13
Aesthetics	13
Project Background, Development, & Implementation	14
Tribes and SANDAG	15
Southern California Tribal Oral History of Transportation and Mobility	16
Chris Devers: Leadership, Sovereignty, and Infrastructure—the Evolution of Pauma Tribal Transportation Governance	16
A Vision for the Future	18
Johnny Hernandez: Overcoming Adversity, Advancing Tribal Infrastructure and Political Advocacy through Leadership	19
Jane Clough: A Path Forged by Experience and a Commitment to Tribal Sovereignty	20
Leonard Gilmore: Advocacy for Workforce Development and Funding in Tribal Transportation and Mobility	23
Conclusion	25
References	28
Data Management Plan	30
Appendix A: Community Readiness Models	31
Appendix B: Interview Flyer	33
Appendix C: Interview Letter of Introduction and Request	34
Appendix D: Interview Consent Form	35
Appendix E: Baseline Interview Questions	37

About the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center

The Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center (UTC) is the Region 9 University Transportation Center funded under the US Department of Transportation's University Transportation Centers Program. Established in 2016, the Pacific Southwest Region UTC (PSR) is led by the University of Southern California and includes seven partners: Long Beach State University; University of California, Davis; University of California, Irvine; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Hawaii; Northern Arizona University; Pima Community College.

The Pacific Southwest Region UTC conducts an integrated, multidisciplinary program of research, education and technology transfer aimed at *improving the mobility of people and goods throughout the region*. Our program is organized around four themes: 1) technology to address transportation problems and improve mobility; 2) improving mobility for vulnerable populations; 3) Improving resilience and protecting the environment; and 4) managing mobility in high growth areas.

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Disclaimer

The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the information presented herein. This document is disseminated in the interest of information exchange. The report is funded, partially or entirely, by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's University Transportation Centers Program. However, the U.S. Government assumes no liability for the contents or use thereof.

California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) Disclaimer

The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the information presented herein. This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the United States Department of Transportation's University Transportation Centers program, in the interest of information exchange. The U.S. Government and the State of California assumes no liability for the contents or use thereof. Nor does the content necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the U.S. Government and the State of California. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation. This report does not constitute an endorsement by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) of any product described herein.

Disclosure

Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigators, others, conducted this research titled, "Title of Project" at [Department, School, University]. The research took place from [start date] to [end date] and was funded by a grant from the [funding source] in the amount of [\$amount]. The research was conducted as part of the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center research program.

Acknowledgements

This research is dedicated to the memory and lifework of the late Raquelle “Kelly” Lynne Myers (4/7/1968-1/27/2023) and the National Indian Justice Center in Santa Rosa, California. Kelly’s work as a tribal lawyer, advocate, grant writer, and changemaker helped synergize the project in ways that she, unfortunately, will never know. Our impact and efforts to advance her advocacy to educate, train, and provide resources to Tribal Nations in California for transportation, mobility, environmental, and myriad other essential needs remain to be seen; however, we want to acknowledge the power of her imprint on Indian Country. She was a force to reckon with, and she leaves us a legacy to continue reconciling through good research, effective policy development, and a commitment to action. We humbly offer this work in her memory.

Abstract

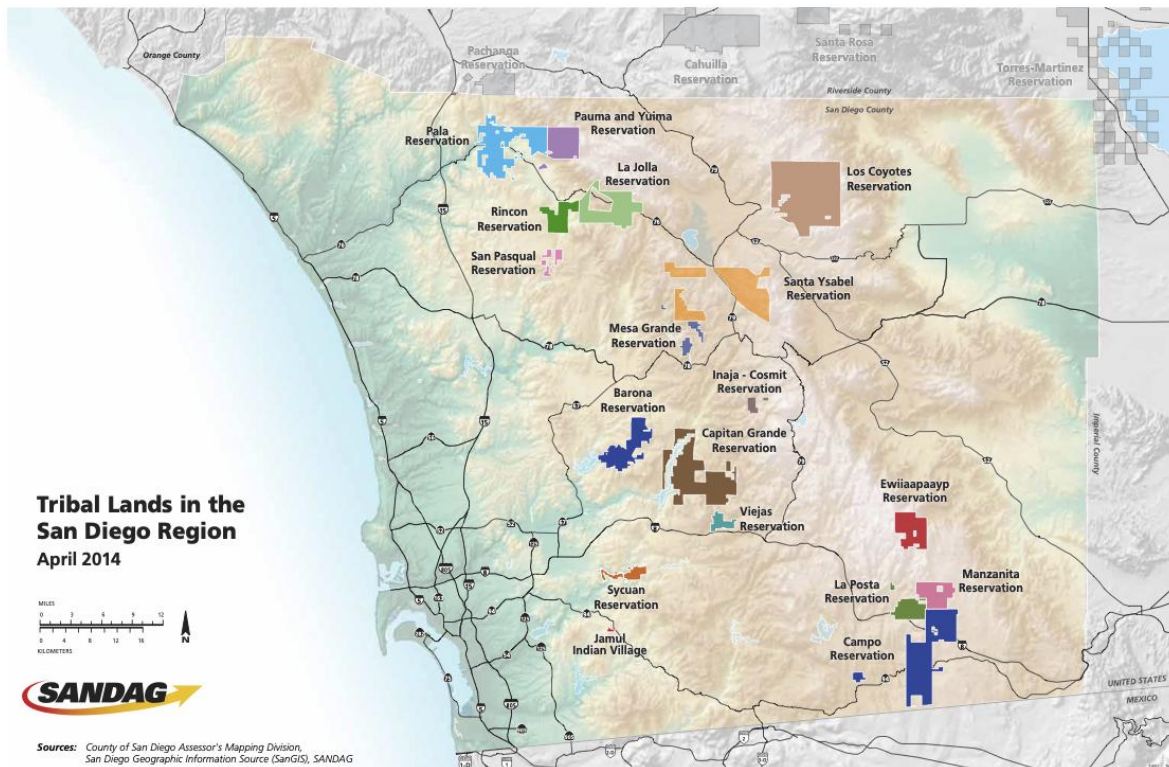


Figure 1 San Diego Association of Governments

There are 109 federally recognized tribes in California and many more state-recognized tribal groups seeking federal recognition. Early in the formation of the United States, the Supreme Court ruled that Tribal Nations were “sovereign, domestic dependent nations,” distinct from states and foreign governments. Thus, tribal governments exercise sovereignty over their lands and governments in similar ways as states and the federal government, including managing roads, bridges, highway access, and other mobility issues related to transportation. However, tribal access to resources to support transportation infrastructure is vastly different from that of states and counties to perform those same tasks.

This project examines the intergovernmental relationship between San Diego County Tribal Nations and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and its development of relationship and practices to prioritize Tribal transportation and mobility needs within the larger regional planning process. SANDAG and the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association (SCTCA) established a formal relationship with Tribal leadership and representation on several key regional committees that provide a platform for Tribal issues to be included in the regional planning process. While this relationship is groundbreaking, this research assesses the collaboration and examines the practices that are most effective to potentially replicate these Native-Local practices in other regions in the Southwest. SANDAG and SCTCA have a

viable working relationship, however, we want to know how this relationship can be improved and expanded to support long-term sustainability and resiliency for Tribes in San Diego County.

The research is grounded in a place-based, oral history format that supports Indigenous traditional knowledge formation and current practices within the discipline of American Indian Studies to blend cultural studies methodologies with transportation policy analysis of the overall regional history of transportation development to examine relevant social, political, and cultural issues impacting the lives of First Peoples. Data collection included: 1) Tribal interviews and transcriptions to develop the oral history, 2) Critical review of the history of Southern California Tribal transportation and mobility, and 3) Development of a GIS Story Map of the territory described with transportation corridors, Tribal roads, and other relevant data provided in the oral histories.

A Southern California Tribal Transportation and Mobility Oral History Narrative from the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center

Executive Summary

There are 109 federally recognized tribes in California and many more state-recognized tribal groups seeking federal recognition. Early in the formation of the United States, the Supreme Court ruled that Tribal Nations were “sovereign, domestic dependent nations,” distinct from states and foreign governments. Thus, tribal governments exercise sovereignty over their lands and governments in similar ways as states and the federal government, including managing roads, bridges, highway access, and other mobility issues related to transportation. However, tribal access to resources to support transportation infrastructure is vastly different from that of states and counties to perform those same tasks.

Findings from this project “Southern California Tribal Transportation and Mobility Oral History” suggest that the San Diego County model of tribal engagement between the Southern California Tribal Chairmen’s Association (SCTCA) and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) can be implemented in other regions of California and throughout the nation in ways that promote meaningful transportation planning functions.

The logic of connecting SCTCA—a multi-service non-profit corporation representing a consortium of 25 federally-recognized Indian tribes in Southern California—with SANDAG, the region’s municipal planning organization (MPO), is both practical and innovative. If entities like SCTCA in other regions find ways to partner with MPOs and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), coalitions of tribes could find common cause to identify local transportation needs and implement related planning functions.

The oral history research also identifies that the next step for tribes in San Diego County, or any other region in the United States, is to move beyond the planning phase to implementation of meaningful transportation projects. Ultimately, transportation planning efforts can address critical tribal transportation and mobility priorities (including, current and future land use issues, pressing economic development priorities, traffic and safety challenges, and a range of other public safety, health, and social needs) but it is all for naught if those plans are never implemented.

The transportation planning collaborations between SANDAG and the 25 tribes that SCTCA represents represent a critical first step toward a range of implementations that have yet to come to fruition. Bringing transportation planning efforts to fruition for Tribes in San Diego County will require new government-to-government relationships between Caltrans and the

U.S. departments of Transportation and the Interior to secure the funding and public policy support required to improve Tribal capacity to design, develop, operate, and maintain critical transportation infrastructure and systems. These new government-to-government relationships cannot be repeats of previously failed policies and engagement methods.

What follows are recommendations that Dr. Gregor and CITT will advocate for and recommend to SCTCA, SANDAG, and beyond to move from planning to implementation.

- SCTCA could create a Transportation Capital Development Fund to build capacity to fund and implement projects.
- SANDAG could create a “Tribal Affairs Unit” to build and sustain Tribal relationships, archive processes and protocols, and innovate partnerships.
- Develop culturally relevant services to create processes informed by Tribal knowledge systems that empower Tribes in the Region.
- Build more inclusive systems of governance that advance representation and ensure Tribal access to participation in all aspects of society (such as, business, workforce development, policy development, training, and education).
- Establish Interlocal Agreements (IA) that expand opportunities for joint Tribal-Regional innovations and solutions.
- Protect Indigenous Data Sovereignty to support, protect, and advance Tribal interests, needs, and priorities to enable American Indian Self-Determination.
- Cultivate partnerships between the Western Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) and the California Local Technical Assistance Programs (LTAP) to provide training and workshops for Tribal governments to improve workforce capacity to better manage transportation inventory and to secure funding for transportation infrastructure and systems.

These recommendations are based on the following critical questions:

- *On the most essential human level, what are the best ways to empower Tribes to operationalize values that are intrinsic to their community needs and priorities?*
- *Conversely, how can non-Native leaders in government support such efforts to engage Tribal communities in respectful and meaningful ways?*

Clearly participatory research addresses this concern. Dr. Gregor’s oral history approach gives voice to the unique Tribal transportation and mobility needs in a way that facilitates a brand of Tribal consultation that Tribal leaders themselves support.

Another promising method of participatory research is the Community Readiness model. Given the complex range of issues that comprise Tribal transportation issues, Community Readiness models provide an integrated way for tribal leaders and government officials to engage communities in ways that address Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) priorities while assessing a specific Tribe’s readiness and willingness to adopt new technologies, systems, and policies.

Community Readiness models have a long history of application in assessing the readiness of a specific community to implement healthcare, addiction, and crisis prevention programs. In recent years, Community Readiness models have been used to assess community readiness for the implementation of new transportation and mobility systems. Community Readiness models measure the attitudes, knowledge, resources, and efforts of a community to assess its readiness to address an issue through implementation of a new technological system or governmental policy.

The overarching goal of the Community Readiness model is to assess community readiness to act on a new behavior that typically improves or enhances, and to help determine and provide appropriate strategies or processes of change to guide the community through the stages of change to action and maintenance. In this way, the Community Readiness model can provide needed context and insight to previous questionnaires and surveys, while also providing a “deep dive” into current challenges and barriers to success within culturally, politically, and geographically specific Tribal communities.¹

Through using education and community engagement tools, like the Community Readiness model, local, state, and federal government officials can demonstrate very intentionally that they are willing to meet Tribal communities on their terms, consult with them about their needs and concerns, and then respond in a way that addresses those needs and concerns in tangible ways. Such approaches will establish necessary frameworks of trust to establish and safeguard the social sustainability required to safeguard parallel economic and environmental sustainability priorities.

The GIS StoryMap that accompanies this project can be found at this link:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c71d9cb3cef14852b0f027c367c0ad8e>

¹ An example of the CR model assessment tool is provided in Appendix A.

Introduction

There are 109 federally recognized tribes in California and many more state-recognized tribal groups seeking federal recognition. Early in the formation of the United States, the Supreme Court ruled that Tribal Nations were “sovereign, domestic dependent nations,” distinct from states and foreign governments. Thus, tribal governments exercise sovereignty over their lands and governments in similar ways as states and the federal government, including managing roads, bridges, highway access, and other mobility issues related to transportation. However, tribal access to resources to support transportation infrastructure is vastly different from that of states and counties to perform those same tasks.

This project examines the intergovernmental relationship between San Diego County Tribal Nations and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and its development of relationship and practices to prioritize Tribal transportation and mobility needs within the larger regional planning process. SANDAG and the SCTCA established a formal relationship with Tribal leadership and representation on several key regional committees that provide a platform for Tribal issues to be included in the regional planning process. While this relationship is groundbreaking, this research assesses the collaboration and examines the practices that are most effective to potentially replicate these Native-Local practices in other regions in the Southwest. SANDAG and SCTCA have a viable working relationship, however, we want to know how this relationship can be improved and expanded to support long-term sustainability and resiliency for Tribes in San Diego County.

Methodology

The oral history approach was used to interview narrators who have participated in the past 15 years in regional tribal transportation engagement in San Diego County. A “narrator” is defined by the Oral History Association as “a person being interviewed during an oral history recording.” While there are many possible terms, including interviewee or chronicler, the OHA’s Core Principles and Practices uses the term narrator exclusively. This project adopted this term to acknowledge that the people interviewed have agency and are not merely “living human subjects.”

The research also applied the American Indian Studies (AIS) framework to the project using five core intellectual premises. These form the disciplinary principles for AIS:

- Place/land,
- Agency,
- Sovereignty,
- Indigenous languages,
- and aesthetics.

This research will engage four of these core tenets as part of its methodology to create an oral history of tribal transportation and mobility needs. The project was approved by the California State University Long Beach Institutional Review Board on October 5, 2023.

Between December 2023 and May 2024, Dr. Gregor interviewed three Tribal leaders, one active and two formers, the inaugural Tribal Liaison for SANDAG, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Transportation Specialist for the Pacific Region. Each interview lasted about one hour and was recorded with permission from each participant. Prior to the interview session, Dr. Gregor emailed each participant a letter of introduction, consent form, and the baseline interview questions.² Dr. Gregor transcribed each recorded interview and then I returned a copy of the transcript along with a link to the video recording to each participant for review and additional edits.

Place/Land

“The first of these is that Indian cultures arise from the relationship of people with the land on which they live. This is both simple and profoundly complex. The land, by which we mean the totality of the physical environment in which indigenous people live, is the ultimate source of spiritual [and political] power.” The worldview, religion, and cosmology of American Indian people are deeply connected to and embedded with places: places of origins, places with special resources, such as water, plants, or animals, and places where great events of a supernatural or extraordinary nature take place. Yet, these concepts remain a point of contention and are often poorly understood by non-natives. Within a transportation context, the land is likewise the centerpiece. Ron Hall writes that, “Tribes, as the original inhabitants of America, have an extensive history of transportation infrastructure development on this continent.” Pre-contact with Europeans, the indigenous network of roads, and trails that spanned North and South America were essential components to tribal movements for hunting, gathering, socializing, and trading.

Today, many existing highways and bypasses follow these ancient routes; for instance, the I-8 corridor that runs from Downtown, San Diego east to Imperial Valley is named as the Kumeyaay Highway both to honor the largest Tribal group in the region and to acknowledge their ancestral movement from the coast to the mountains to the desert as part of their seasonal travel patterns. These patterns of movement were/are grounded in not only practices for survival, but they are also embedded in tribal oral traditions and stories of emergence as part of their cultural ontology.

Agency

First People “were [and are] active agents in, rather than the hapless victims of, forces of historical change.” This research will center the voices of past and present Tribal leaders/representatives and their embodied knowledge about tribal transportation and

² See Appendix B-D.

mobility in San Diego County, which will affirm their agency and role as primary stakeholders in delineating regional priorities that impact their lands/communities.

Sovereignty

Relationships based on political power have changed. Indian tribes have been caught in the larger tension of states' rights versus the rights of the US government. Indian identity has assumed political dimensions that are intertwined with cultural ones. The study of this political relationship presents opportunities for a critical analysis of both American history and contemporary relationships between tribes and the US government." This premise is central to this research and to American Indian Studies and affirms that Tribal Nations are and have always been self-governing entities. Tribal societies predate European contact and are the democratic model for what would become the United States of America (Lyons, Inouye, and Matthiessen, 1992). Tribal contributions to infrastructure development, climate adaptation, and environmental resilience are hallmarks of sovereignty and land stewardship. This research will address sovereignty and sovereign relations from the narrators, their experience, and their historical/cultural knowledge.

Aesthetics

"The final premise is that art and aesthetics are essential ways in which contemporary Native people express their senses of identity. Again, this assertion seems obvious, but it encompasses the ideas of traditional images and relationships with the earth, the impact of historical change, and the notion of what constitutes Indian identity."

This premise frames the cultural expressions of the San Diego Tribal groups within a contemporary context to understand fully their historical and present relationship to the land and culture. In addition, the research will situate the location of the CITI within the sacred Tongva/Acjachemen village of Puvungna, the gathering place. The origin stories and stories of emergence from Puvungna share two epic narratives that formulate the spiritual philosophy and doctrines of relationship-building and well-being that many Southern California Tribal Nations incorporate into their cosmology and ceremonial practices (Boscana in Townsend and Harrington, 1933).

In other words, the oral tradition or history that emerged at Puvungna travelled east and south across the land and was adapted and incorporated into the worldview of regional Tribes. The location of CITI within this sacred territory creates a responsibility in conducting Tribal research to incorporate these indigenous values and consider their applications and efficacy in relation to the challenges we are seeking solutions. In this way, the research will integrate sacred knowledge and extend its meaning to 21st century contexts. The same byways and highways, used to share these creation stories, exist today, and should be analyzed alongside developments that seek to understand the same migration and mobility patterns today.

Project Background, Development, & Implementation

Dr. Gregor is from the Iipay (e-peí) Nation of Santa Ysabel, part of the Kumeyaay Nation that extends from Northern San Diego County, USA to Baja California, Mexico. San Diego County is home to 17 distinct Tribal Nations, more than any other County in the US per capita. She is also an Associate Professor at CSULB and the Director of the Program in American Indian Studies at CSU Long Beach. This project developed from a conversation that began seven years ago between her and Dr. Tyler Reeb, the interim director for the Center for International Trade and Transportation at CSU Long Beach. At the time, she was the first tenure-track hire in American Indian Studies in over thirty-seven years, and Dr. Reeb reached out to her to share his research and work with CITT and to gauge her interest in tribal transportation and logistics. She was interested in the Center and its research, especially issues pertaining to disaster preparedness, long-term recovery, and resilience. Due to the workload and demands of being a junior faculty member, she was unable to pursue her interests that intersected with CITT. Fast forward to Spring 2023, Tyler reached out to me again, and this time, they were both ready and available to move forward with a collaborative research project.

The Southern California Tribal Transportation and Mobility Oral History project grew out of a mutual interest to gauge the current needs, relationships, and partnerships CITT had or could develop with the Tribal Nations in Southern California. While There are 109 federally recognized Tribes in California, and many more state-recognized Tribal groups seeking federal recognition, there are no federally recognized Tribes in Los Angeles County. The City of Long Beach recognizes, however, tribal organizations (nonprofits) that the California Native American Heritage Commission identifies as cultural descendants in territories where there are not federal Indian Tribes located. Although CITT regularly works with state and regional Tribal networks through a network of associations from USDOT, Caltrans, METTRANS, and Tribal Technical Assistance Programs (TTAPs); CITT did not have any functional relationships with the 33 Tribal Nations in Southern California. This was an obvious absence and gap that we knew we could address immediately.

Gregor's training and expertise are in Literature and Writing Studies, with a specialty in American Indian Studies, Tribal Nonprofit Leadership, and Tribal Community Resilience. She has a deep understanding about policy development, capacity building, grant writing, project development, and strategic planning for Tribal Nations and communities from my work as a grant writer, tribal administrator, and nonprofit director. These professional skills determined the approach I could offer to my collaboration with Dr. Reeb. Instead of conducting a needs assessment or an information survey of interest with Tribes, we advocated for an oral history approach. These methodologies help us engage and understand the past and current transportation and mobility needs of Tribes in Southern California by listening to Tribal representatives from the region. The goal of the project was to develop an understanding about Tribal perspectives, experiences, and assessments of the relationship with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), a nongovernmental organization that facilitates the development of and funding for San Diego County's regional plans, climate action plans, and long-term transportation plans).

Drs. Gregor and Reeb agreed that a first step towards establishing a working relationship with the Tribes in Southern California would require understanding the status of Tribal transportation in the region, e.g. listening to their experiences and concerns. Based on the Intraregional Tribal Transportation Strategy, we developed open-ended questions to interview 10 Tribal leaders and agency representatives (past and present) who worked on transportation issues with the Tribes in San Diego County in the past decade. We presented to the SCTCA executive board of directors in November 2024 the proposal for this project to seek their guidance, suggestions, and approval to interview their former and current Tribal representatives to SANDAG. We were met with mixed opinions about the efficacy and benefits of our research due to a recurring refrain expressing frustration about “yet another study” versus actionable and tangible efforts to implement transportation priorities. In the end, Gregor was able to interview 2 former Tribal leaders, a representative from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Division of Transportation, and the former Tribal Liaison for SANDAG.

Tribes and SANDAG

SANDAG is comprised of 18 representatives from the municipalities in San Diego County, including a representative from the County Board of Supervisors. In the early 2000s, SANDAG and the Southern California Tribal Chairman’s Association (SCTCA) began dialoguing about how to improve their communication and relationship to strengthen regional planning. SCTCA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1972. It serves a consortium of 25 federally recognized tribes with a mission to provide services for the health, welfare, safety, education, cultural, economic and employment needs of its tribal members and descendants in the San Diego County urban areas. A board of directors comprised of tribal chairpersons from each of its member Tribes, which are predominantly from San Diego and Riverside Counties, governs SCTCA.

Thus, I assessed the Intraregional Tribal Transportation Strategy (ITTS) developed in 2018 between SCTCA and SANDAG. This report identifies and discusses the process SANDAG and SCTCA used to develop intraregional strategies to “advance the transportation goals of Tribal communities.” The ITTS begins with a detailed legal description of what a Tribe is, how it is distinct from a state, and the Tribal authority to govern its territory. In San Diego County, Tribal Nations occupy 127,000 acres (about half the area of San Antonio, Texas), which is 4% of the County’s 2.9-million-acre land base. The current Tribal boundaries are a direct outcome from the suppression of the 1852 Treaty of Santa Ysabel, signed by leaders from what would become the most of the 18 federally recognized Tribes that we see today. However, the land promised in the Treaty of Santa Ysabel comprised 50% of present-day San Diego County. Neither the Treaty of the current composition of reservations included any of the Tribal lands near the coastline of San Diego County. The accumulated loss of land from the suppressed Treaty is a major factor to many Tribal social, economic, and cultural disadvantages. There were 8 objectives to achieve with the completion of the ITTS: understand existing conditions, identify areas of need that achieve federal, state, and regional goals, identify projects to improve tribal mobility, estimate costs for projects, develop criteria for clustering projects, determine

responsible parties and jurisdictions, develop a strategy to improve multimodal tribal access to intraregional transportation, and identify projects with early implementation potential.

The 2015 Regional Plan influenced the creation of the ITTS (2018). These reports and plans provide a regional baseline analysis that demonstrates the important work that SCTCA and SANDAG have undertaken, and they also contain critical data about Tribal priorities to improve safety on the highways and routes that traverse Tribal lands. Significantly, the report identified that “Tribes lack the resources to plan for their mobility needs and to address problem areas in the region that most hinder their intraregional mobility.” A corollary gap that ITTS found was the lack of a collective, intertribal process, for Tribes to work on transportation issues for implementation, such as on highways and road corridors that bypass multiple reservations. While this information is incredibly important, it only tells part of the story about the Tribal-Regional relationship, and it does not fully capture or discuss cultural aspects and approaches to the process, or cultural understandings about transportation and mobility in the region that support Tribal sovereignty. In a nutshell, and to paraphrase my colleague, Tyler Reeb, building a framework of trust requires us to listen to people, to hear their stories, and to validate their experiences as an equally significant data source.

Below is the Oral History, which is a composite of key points, summaries, and quotes from each narrator along with their demographic information, Tribal affiliation, and/or agency role. Links to the audio files of the oral history interviews are provided in each Chapter along with the individual transcript. Following the Transcripts is a brief analysis that discusses the process of completing the oral history and potential initiatives that this project can model and move forward with Tribal Nations, CITT, and CSULB.

Southern California Tribal Oral History of Transportation and Mobility

Tribal transportation and infrastructure development present unique challenges and opportunities for Tribal Nations in Southern California, as reflected in the oral histories from Chris Devers, Johnny Hernandez, Leonard Gilmore, and Jane Clough. The interplay between funding mechanisms, bureaucratic processes, historical marginalization, and cultural considerations defines the evolving landscape of tribal mobility. Each narrator’s oral history is presented as a separate analysis that highlight the critical issues surrounding tribal transportation, the successes achieved, and the path forward for Southern California American Indians.

Chris Devers: Leadership, Sovereignty, and Infrastructure—the Evolution of Pauma Tribal Transportation Governance

Chris Devers’ journey into leadership began in the 1980s when he first joined the Pauma Tribal Council. Over the years, he wore many hats—committee member, vice chairman, Water Master overseeing irrigation and drinking water projects, and eventually, Tribal Chairman from 2001 to

2010. His tenure was marked by ambition and vision. “I wanted to be tribal chairman before I turned 50,” he once shared, revealing a blend of personal drive and commitment to his community. He won five consecutive elections, a testament to his leadership and the trust his people placed in him.

During his leadership, Devers navigated Pauma Tribe through pivotal changes. Indian gaming emerged as a transformative force, boosting economic development and increasing tribal visibility. Under his watch, Pauma’s casino opened its doors, bringing in revenue that allowed the tribe to negotiate with local and state governments on infrastructure projects. Yet, these negotiations were not without challenges. “We knew that at some point, we had to talk to them,” Chris admitted, acknowledging the delicate balance of maintaining sovereignty while engaging with external authorities.

The growth of gaming, however, brought unforeseen complications. Increased traffic led to county demands for road repair funds. Tribes, including Pauma, contributed to these costs, but the state never provided a clear account of how the funds were spent. “The state has never given an audit as to what they have done with those funds,” Chris noted, his frustration echoing the broader concerns of transparency and accountability in state-tribal relations.

Infrastructure development has always been a double-edged sword for Pauma. The community needed better roads and facilities, but engaging with state agencies came with strings attached. Elders voiced their fears, warning, “You let them in, and you’ll never get rid of them.” These words reflected a historical wariness born from centuries of broken promises and encroachments on tribal sovereignty. Yet, the reality of modern development required compromise and strategic negotiation.

The ability to compromise and work with non-Tribal interests in Tribal development was evident when Pauma engaged with residents from the Pauma Valley Estates, an affluent gated-community adjacent to Pauma Reservation lands that was once owned by the famous western actor, John Wayne. Dealing with the Pauma Valley Estates community watch group faced its own challenges, particularly with the proposal to install a traffic signal at the intersection at Cole Grade and State Route 76, a project that has still not materialized. Chris became the bridge between hesitant residents and state consultants. His long-standing presence and leadership made him a trusted figure. In the end, a traffic study revealed that most congestion came from the Pala area, deprioritizing the traffic light request. Despite this setback, Chris remained committed to community safety and development, advocating for solutions that balanced necessity with fiscal responsibility.

Devers explained that Highway 76 has always been a point of contention in regional transportation planning. There were talks of expanding the highway to accommodate potential residential growth, but the projections did not support the feasibility of 800–900 new homes in the area. The plan was eventually abandoned, but the debate highlighted the complex interplay between development, community needs, and environmental preservation. Devers insights are substantiated by SANDAG regional transportation plans developed with Tribal consultation that identified and prioritized adding safety improvements to Highway 76.

Securing road funding, however, is no easy feat, especially when dealing with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). “The BIA has the responsibility to maintain them,” Chris stated, pointing to the federal obligation that was often underfunded or delayed. Besides funding major state and county highways and roads, Pauma’s situation was complicated by the fact that only one mile of road was officially on BIA records, severely limiting funding allocation for the Reservation. In the 1980s and 1990s, Tribal leaders like Ben Scerato (Santa Ysabel) joined Devers in pushing for federal transportation funds, navigating bureaucratic red tape and political priorities that favored more populated areas.

Funding allocation was a constant battle. “We’re gonna put the money where the people are... It’s a numbers game,” Devers explained, capturing the cold logic of political decision-making. Despite advocating for safety-related projects, such as widening corners on Highway 76, progress was slow, and the community’s needs often went unmet. Today, traffic congestion remains a persistent issue, particularly near Pala and Escondido. Despite the repeated claim that infrastructure improvements would benefit not only the Tribal communities but also employees and customers of local businesses.

During Devers tenure, public transit initiatives were attempted, including the creation of designated carpool lots and casino shuttle vans from Interstate 15, but many drivers/commuters prefer the freedom of driving alone. “I don’t want to climb into a van full of people; I might want to stay awhile,” Devers recalled hearing from community members, highlighting the car-cultural value of autonomy and flexibility.

A Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, Devers remains skeptical about certain trends, particularly the push for electric vehicles. “There’s no way you’re going to be able to develop charging stations for enough vehicles,” he argued, pointing to the logistical challenges of charging infrastructure in rural areas. He noted that even though some Tribal enterprises like Pala and Rincon have installed charging stations, he doesn’t believe they are used enough. The fragmented nature of charging standards among different car brands only complicated matters further, he asserts.

Devers’ vision for the future of Pauma revolves around balanced development that respects cultural heritage while embracing modern opportunities. He recognizes the need for strategic regional planning, including potential expansions of Interstate-15. “At some point, they’re gonna have to look at expanding 15... and there is no other route,” he said, showing his pragmatic understanding of regional growth. Yet, his advocacy always circles back to community safety and well-being. “Sometimes you have to forego the numbers game and do a project out here... because it’s the right thing to do,” Devers insists, underscoring his unwavering commitment to his people.

Devers’ oral history is one of leadership, resilience, and vision. From navigating the complexities of tribal sovereignty to advocating for infrastructure improvements, his experience reflects the evolving challenges faced by indigenous communities. His legacy is not just in the roads built or

the casino that boosted economic growth but in the preservation of cultural identity and community values. The Pauma Tribe and Reservation remain a testament to continuity amid change—a People and place where history is remembered, traditions are honored, and the future is shaped with wisdom and courage.

Johnny Hernandez: Overcoming Adversity, Advancing Tribal Infrastructure and Political Advocacy through Leadership

Johnny Hernandez's tenure as the Chairman of the Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel, from 2002 to 2012, is marked by a deep sense of resilience and a commitment to improving the infrastructure and political standing of his community. Born in 1952 and raised on the Santa Ysabel Reservation, Hernandez's experience is one of overcoming severe infrastructure challenges and navigating a complex, and what he felt was often an indifferent, political landscape. His reflections and narration reveal the stark contrasts between the Santa Ysabel Tribe's struggles and the privileges afforded to surrounding towns and cities, as well as the ongoing fight for equitable treatment within the larger framework of Tribal-state relations.

Growing up on the Reservation, Hernandez experienced firsthand the extreme lack of basic services. The Reservation was an isolated, resource-poor area, with no electricity, no running water, and only dirt roads. "Me and my grandfather would go out to our road (driveway) and fix it... we put big rocks in the ruts just to make it to our house," Hernandez recalls, vividly illustrating the daily hardships of his childhood. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) graded roads only twice a year, leaving families to fend for themselves. Water was scarce, and families had to haul it from a church well four miles away, relying on kerosene lamps for light. Despite these challenges, Hernandez persevered and eventually became an instrumental figure in improving the Reservation's infrastructure. Under his leadership, the Tribe secured grants to pave main roads, provide electricity to outlying sectors of the Reservation, and establish a reliable water system. "We finally improved our infrastructure, and we also have our own water system today. It all came late, but it finally got here," he reflects, a testament to the slow but steady progress achieved during his time as Chairman.

The Iipay Nation's difficulties were not only about physical infrastructure; they also involved a history of political disenfranchisement. Hernandez's leadership was shaped by the stark realization that the government often viewed Native tribes as mere political tools, rather than equal partners in decision-making. Hernandez's experience with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) illustrates this political marginalization. "Reservations were never a player in their plans... They used our status to make their numbers look bigger for grants," he says. Despite having a seat at the table, tribal representatives had no voting power, and decisions were made by an executive board that often ignored their input. Hernandez also describes the coercive nature of gaming compacts, where tribes were forced to sign memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to open casinos. These agreements required them to fund road improvements near casinos, but the funds rarely benefitted non-gaming tribes like Santa Ysabel. "If you didn't sign the MOU, you couldn't open a casino. Legal blackmail, huh?" he asserts, highlighting the exploitative conditions under which the Tribe operated.

The struggle for fair treatment was compounded by a lack of governmental oversight. Hernandez points out the disarray in transportation funding, specifically noting that there had never been an audit of road money to ensure it was properly spent. While some main roads were paved during his tenure, many of the dirt roads leading to tribal homes in the mountains remained in poor condition. "As far as I know, there has never been an audit of the road's money or where it went," Hernandez remarks, revealing his frustration with the lack of accountability. Heavy tourism traffic in Julian and Santa Ysabel further exacerbated the issue, leading to road congestion that trapped Tribal members at home during weekends. These persistent road issues, combined with the high cost of repairs and the lack of support from the government, were constant reminders of the inequalities that Native communities faced.

Perhaps the most striking element of Hernandez's oral history narration is his belief that the Santa Ysabel Tribe was deliberately placed in a position of isolation and deprivation. "We were put on this reservation to suffer... There is nothing around us except a place to live," he says, a poignant statement that underscores the systemic neglect faced by Native communities. The tribe's location, surrounded by few resources and distant from urban centers, compounded the difficulties in accessing basic services and employment opportunities. Many Tribal members have been forced to leave the Reservation in search of work, as there were few local job opportunities. The lack of infrastructure, in addition to the political and economic challenges, led many to view the Reservation as a place of marginalization.

Despite the many challenges, Hernandez remains hopeful for the future. He continues to advocate for grants to pave the remaining roads and improve the community's infrastructure, though he acknowledges that progress may take years. Reflecting on the broader picture, he highlights the deep historical disenfranchisement of Native peoples, who were placed on lands devoid of valuable resources. "They didn't put us here because there's gold in the land or oil in the land... they put us on this thing that we couldn't really make it," he observes, a powerful comment on the systemic forces that have shaped the fate of Native tribes.

Hernandez's experiences reveal a narrative of perseverance against long-standing adversity. His leadership brought some improvements to the Santa Ysabel Reservation, but the road to true political power and infrastructure development remains long and uncertain. As he reflects on his time in leadership, it is clear that while some progress was made, the structural inequalities faced by Native communities, both in terms of infrastructure and political representation, persist.

Jane Clough: A Path Forged by Experience and a Commitment to Tribal Sovereignty

Jane Clough's career began with a deep appreciation for cultural dynamics, cultivated by her work with Indigenous communities in South America. This background shaped her approach to tribal consultation, steering her away from superficial "checkbox" methods and toward genuine, trust-building engagement. Her journey at SANDAG was marked by a series of role transitions influenced by organizational restructuring. Eventually, she dedicated herself full-

time to tribal liaison work, a commitment she described emphatically: “If I'm going to do this seriously, it's going to be full-time for at least three years, only tribal work.” After establishing a solid foundation for tribal consultation, she transitioned to environmental justice, continuing her mission to amplify marginalized voices. Her dedication to authentic engagement would be tested by historical mistrust and systemic challenges, but she was resolute in her purpose.

Traditionally, SANDAG’s approach to tribal consultation was procedural—sending letters to tribes at the draft stage and awaiting feedback. Clough quickly recognized the ineffectiveness of this model. Influenced by her South American experiences, she sought to reform the process into a collaborative and respectful dialogue. Her vision was clear: “How do we connect in a way that's not going to be checking the boxes because I wasn't going to do that.” To achieve this, Clough initiated informal conversations with tribal leaders, facilitated by her collaboration with Mario from Caltrans District 11. Their teamwork was pioneering; Mario was the first tribal liaison at the district level, and together, they approached tribal engagement with a fresh perspective. The journey was not without obstacles. At an SCTCA (Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association) meeting, an elder confronted her, stating, “You’re not welcome here. SANDAG, you’re not welcome here.” This moment of resistance did not deter Clough. Instead, she saw it as an opportunity to listen, learn, and persist. Her perseverance paid off as she built a strategic partnership with Chairman Smith, who desired meaningful tribal involvement but needed guidance on how to actualize it. Together, they strategized to include SCTCA leadership on SANDAG’s Borders Committee, culminating in the first Tribal Summit in 2006—a groundbreaking event that laid the groundwork for ongoing collaboration.

The 2006 Tribal Summit was a milestone in SANDAG-SCTCA relations. It was meticulously planned, not just by SANDAG but through joint efforts with elected officials from both organizations: “We wanted to do it right... we actually had a planning committee of elected officials from the SCTCA and from the Borders Committee.” This inclusive planning approach ensured balanced representation and meaningful dialogue, setting a collaborative precedent for future interactions. The summit’s success catalyzed a shift in institutional policy, leading to the inclusion of SCTCA chairs on all policy advisory committees. This move was strategic and transformative: “The solution that worked for a long time was having the SCTCA chair on the SANDAG board and SCTCA chairs on all of the policy advisory committees.” To support ongoing participation, Clough secured a \$50,000 annual budget for SCTCA, recognizing that resource constraints hindered their capacity to engage consistently: “We put in \$50,000 a year for the SCTCA, basically, just to keep them at the table... making sure they would get paid to come to the SANDAG meetings.” This funding was more than financial support—it was a commitment to ensuring Indigenous voices were heard and valued in regional decision-making.

While the Tribal Summit marked progress, sustaining engagement proved challenging. The development of an intra-regional tribal transportation strategy revealed the complexities of aligning diverse tribal interests. Clough candidly acknowledged: “You'd never get any tribes to collectively prioritize anything... If you did something in the south, the northern tribes wouldn't care.”

Further complications arose when leadership changes disrupted established processes. When Hassan took over at SANDAG, he halted the nearly finalized transportation strategy to pursue a new vision, eroding tribal trust: “He ended up... cutting the legs off of this process... which I think the tribes really appreciated.” This abrupt transition underscored the importance of consistent leadership and transparent decision-making, especially in sensitive cross-cultural contexts. Clough’s role as a bridge-builder became even more crucial as she navigated internal challenges and managed frustrations from tribal leaders who felt sidelined.

Clough’s advocacy extended beyond project-specific challenges. She championed institutional reforms, leveraging each iteration of the regional plan to refine tribal consultation practices. Her strategic foresight ensured SCTCA’s influence across policy advisory committees, making tribal perspectives integral to SANDAG’s decision-making.

Yet, she faced internal obstacles. Reflecting on her impending retirement, Clough expressed concerns about the sustainability of her work: “I want to retire when... there's enough of an institutional framework... that I could walk away, and it would be fine.” However, she was disappointed by the lack of succession planning at SANDAG: “I didn't get the opportunity to make a good succession plan... they really didn't do an RFQ or take it out to the street.” Despite bureaucratic challenges, Clough remained committed to building a resilient institutional framework that would continue to support tribal engagement after her departure.

Clough’s journey is one of courage, persistence, and strategic collaboration. Her legacy is not just the policies she shaped but the relationships she built and the trust she fostered. She recognized the historical distrust stemming from past injustices and navigated these complexities with respect and empathy. Reflecting on her impact, Clough emphasized the transformative power of genuine consultation: “They felt like they had a place at the table... that was so transformative for them.” Her work with SANDAG and SCTCA has left an indelible mark on regional planning, setting a new standard for tribal-government collaboration. Yet, Clough’s narrative is also a reminder of the ongoing journey toward equity and inclusion. Her story inspires future leaders to engage meaningfully, advocate tirelessly, and, above all, listen deeply.

Jane Clough’s oral history narration illustrates the power of visionary leadership rooted in cultural understanding and mutual respect. Her dedication to breaking down institutional barriers and fostering authentic tribal consultation has reshaped regional planning in San Diego. Her story is not merely about policy evolution but about healing historical wounds through sustained dialogue and collaboration.

As regional planning continues to evolve, Clough’s legacy serves as a guiding light, reminding us that genuine inclusion is not about checking boxes but about building bridges—and about having one conversation that leads to building and improving one road at a time.

Leonard Gilmore: Advocacy for Workforce Development and Funding in Tribal Transportation and Mobility

Leonard Gilmore's insights into tribal transportation planning, funding challenges, and cultural integration offer a profound understanding of the complexities surrounding tribal mobility and infrastructure development. His commentary underscores the evolving relationship between tribal governments, regional planning agencies, and state authorities, while also highlighting the importance of hands-on experiences and Indigenous knowledge in addressing contemporary transportation issues.

Gilmore stresses the necessity of experiential learning for students and professionals engaged in American Indian studies and tribal planning. He asserts, "I think modern contemporary examples of hands-on work environment... what's happening? I think that's important that they know what's going on." This perspective underscores the value of direct involvement in planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that future tribal leaders and planners have the tools necessary to navigate the bureaucratic and technical aspects of transportation planning.

Gilmore highlights several fundamental challenges facing tribal transportation efforts. One of the most pressing concerns is the reliance on outdated Long-Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs), which impacts funding eligibility and planning efficacy. He states, "I think tribes do really become more successful... when they do compile their long-range transportation plan... and actually incorporate it into the county's long-range transportation plan." His remarks indicate that updating these documents is essential for tribes to secure the necessary resources and assert their transportation needs within regional frameworks.

Another major issue is the hesitancy of tribal communities to engage with regional planning agencies due to historical marginalization. Gilmore observes, "Tribes... were leery... they weren't sure... their concerns were gonna be heard... But lately... it's been smooth." This shift in perception signals progress in tribal-government relations yet also emphasizes the importance of continued engagement and trust-building efforts.

Funding disparities remain a critical obstacle in tribal transportation development. Gilmore identifies staff turnover, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as a primary setback. He notes, "The biggest obstacle is basically the lack of staff... the turnarounds... when COVID hit a lot of folks were let go... the lack of funding is a huge thing." His comments reflect broader systemic issues, where limited financial and human resources hinder long-term project implementation and sustainability.

Furthermore, Gilmore critiques the transition from a road mileage-based funding model to a population-based formula, which disadvantages smaller tribes with extensive road networks

but fewer residents. His insights reveal how policy shifts at higher governmental levels disproportionately affect tribal communities, making advocacy and strategic planning even more crucial.

Despite these challenges, Gilmore highlights significant progress, particularly in securing dedicated funding for tribal transportation projects. He acknowledges, "...successful in terms of persuading SANDAG... maybe set aside... \$5 million to address either one or two large scale projects or a couple of small-scale projects." This success exemplifies how persistent advocacy, and collaboration can yield tangible benefits for tribal transportation infrastructure.

Gilmore also envisions a future where LRTPs become dynamic working documents rather than static reports. He argues, "Reengaging the tribes...having the tribes being a host...is another way to create jobs...preserving your existing road could be as good or even better than a new road but the cost would be 1/3 of a new road." His perspective advocates for a more cost-effective and community-driven approach, promoting job creation and economic sustainability through road maintenance and preservation.

Beyond the technical and financial aspects, Gilmore emphasizes the cultural and historical dimensions of tribal transportation. He incorporates traditional Navajo practices into his travel routines, stating, "I sing to the road a song... and sometimes I'll even put down corn pollen... let them (the road and animals) know that I'm gonna be coming through." This sentiment underscores the deep spiritual connection Indigenous communities have with the land and the importance of integrating cultural practices into modern transportation planning.

Additionally, Gilmore raises concerns over perpetual right-of-way agreements, particularly regarding state projects like the Caltrans Middle Mile Project. He warns, "You never know...state roads going through our reservation...hauling uranium ore...how do you keep that as a public road but at the same time...control that rather than giving into perpetual rights-of-way." His concerns highlight the need for tribal sovereignty in transportation planning and the potential long-term implications of relinquishing control over critical infrastructure.

Leonard Gilmore's analysis of tribal transportation challenges and successes presents a comprehensive roadmap for future improvements. His advocacy for hands-on experience, updated LRTPs, equitable funding distribution, and cultural integration showcases a holistic approach to transportation planning. His insights serve as a call to action for increased collaboration between tribes, regional agencies, and state authorities to ensure that tribal transportation systems are not only functional but also culturally respectful and economically sustainable. By prioritizing strategic planning, workforce development, and sovereignty preservation, tribal communities can navigate the complexities of modern transportation while honoring their historical and cultural legacies.

Conclusion

Findings from this project “Southern California Tribal Transportation and Mobility Oral History” suggest that the San Diego County model of tribal engagement between the Southern California Tribal Chairmen’s Association (SCTCA) and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) can be implemented in other regions of California and throughout the nation in ways that promote meaningful transportation planning functions, develop consistent processes and protocols for Tribal regional engagement, and further the implementation of Tribal infrastructure.

The logic of connecting SCTCA—a multi-service non-profit corporation representing a consortium of 25 federally-recognized Indian tribes in Southern California—with SANDAG, the region’s municipal planning organization (MPO), is both practical and innovative. If entities like SCTCA in other regions find ways to partner with MPOs and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), coalitions of tribes could find common cause to identify local transportation needs and implement related planning functions.

The oral history research also identifies that the next step for tribes in San Diego County, or any other region in the United States, is to move beyond the planning phase to implementation of meaningful transportation projects. Ultimately, transportation planning efforts can address critical tribal transportation and mobility priorities (including, current and future land use issues, pressing economic development priorities, traffic and safety challenges, and a range of other public safety, health, and social needs) but it is all for naught if those plans are never implemented.

The transportation planning collaborations between SANDAG and the 25 tribes that SCTCA represents represent a critical first step toward a range of implementations that have yet to come to fruition. Bringing transportation planning efforts to fruition for Tribes in San Diego County will require new government-to-government relationships between Caltrans and the U.S. departments of Transportation and the Interior to secure the funding and public policy support required to improve Tribal capacity to design, develop, operate, and maintain critical transportation infrastructure and systems. These new government-to-government relationships cannot be repeats of previously failed policies and engagement methods.

What follows are recommendations that Dr. Gregor and CITT will advocate for and recommend to SCTCA, SANDAG, and beyond to move from planning to implementation.

- SCTCA could act as the fiscal sponsor for San Diego County Tribes to build capacity to fund and implement projects.
- SANDAG could expand its Tribal Liaison role and create a “Tribal Affairs Unit” to build and sustain Tribal relationships, archive processes and protocols, and innovate partnerships through grant writing, technical assistance, and training.

- SCTCA could develop and disseminate culturally relevant services to create processes informed by Tribal knowledge systems that empower Tribes in the Region.
- Build more inclusive systems of governance that advance representation and ensure Tribal access to participation in all aspects of society (such as, business, workforce development, policy development, training, and education).
- Establish Interlocal Agreements (IA) that expand opportunities for joint Tribal-Regional innovations and solutions.
- Protect Indigenous Data Sovereignty to support, protect, and advance Tribal interests, needs, and priorities to enable American Indian Self-Determination.
- Cultivate partnerships between the Western Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) and the California Local Technical Assistance Programs (LTAP) to provide training and workshops for Tribal governments to improve workforce capacity to better manage transportation inventory and to secure funding for transportation infrastructure and systems.

These recommendations are based on the following critical questions: *On the most essential human level, what are the best ways to empower Tribes to operationalize values that are intrinsic to their community needs and priorities? Conversely, how can non-Native leaders in government support such efforts to engage Tribal communities in respectful and meaningful ways?* Clearly participatory research addresses this concern. Dr. Gregor’s oral history approach gives voice to the unique Tribal transportation and mobility needs in a way that facilitates a brand of Tribal consultation that Tribal leaders themselves support.

Another promising method of participatory research is the Community Readiness model. Given the complex range of issues that comprise Tribal transportation issues, Community Readiness models provide an integrated way for tribal leaders and government officials to engage communities in ways that address Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) priorities while assessing a specific Tribe’s readiness and willingness to adopt new technologies, systems, and policies.

Community Readiness models have a long history of application in assessing the readiness of a specific community to implement healthcare, addiction, and crisis prevention programs. In recent years, Community Readiness models have been used to assess community readiness for the implementation of new transportation and mobility systems. CR models measure the attitudes, knowledge, resources, and efforts of a community to assess its readiness to address an issue through implementation of a new technological system or governmental policy. The overarching goal of the CR model is to assess community readiness to act on a new behavior that typically improves or enhances, and to help determine and provide appropriate strategies or processes of change to guide the community through the stages of change to action and maintenance. In this way, the CR model can provide needed context and insight to previous questionnaires and surveys, while also providing a “deep dive” into current challenges and barriers to success within culturally, politically, and geo-graphically specific Tribal communities.³

³ An example of the CR model assessment tool is provided in Appendix A.

Through using education and community engagement tools, like the CR model, local, state, and federal government officials can demonstrate very intentionally that they are willing to meet Tribal communities on their terms, consult with them about their needs and concerns, and then respond in a way that addresses those needs and concerns in tangible ways. Such approaches will establish necessary frameworks of trust to establish and safeguard the social sustainability required to safeguard parallel economic and environmental sustainability priorities.

References

- Boscana, Father Geronimo, Phil Townsend Hanna, and John P. Harrington. *Chinigchinich: A Revised and Annotated Version of Father Geronimo Boscana's Historical Account of the Belief, Usages, Customs, and Extravagancies of the Indians of the Mission of San Juan Capistrano Called the Acagchemem Tribe*. (Translated by Alfred Robinson). Fine Arts Press, 1933.
- Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 30 U.S. 5 Pet. 1 1 (United States Supreme Court 1831), <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/30/1/>.
- Deloria, Vine. *Spirit & Reason*. Golden (Colo.): Fulcrum, 1999.
- Edwards, Ruth W., Pamela Jumper-Thurman, Barbara A. Plested, Eugene R. Oetting, and Louis Swanson. "Community Readiness: Research to Practice." *Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 3 (2000): 291–307. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1520-6629\(200005\)28:3<291::AID-JCOP5>3.0.CO;2-9](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1520-6629(200005)28:3<291::AID-JCOP5>3.0.CO;2-9).
- Eisner, Eric. "The Law-of-Nations Origins of the Marshall Trilogy." *The Yale Law Journal* 133, no. 3 (January 2024). <https://www.yalelawjournal.org/comment/the-law-of-nations-origins-of-the-marshall-trilogy>.
- Hall, Ronald C. "Strategies for Empower Mobility in Indian Country." In *Empowering the New Mobility Workforce: Educating, Training, and Inspiring Future Transportation Professionals*, edited by Tyler D. Reeb. Cambridge, MA: Elsevier, 2019.
- Hayati C. "Assessing the Local Community Readiness to Sunda Strait Bridge Development Plan: (Case Study: Cilegon City)." *Media Mahardhika* 17, no. 1 (September 30, 2018): 54–66. <https://doi.org/10.29062/mahardika.v17i1.58>.
- Keefe, Elyse M., Rebecca B. Naumann, Kelly R. Evenson, Seth LaJeunesse, Stephen Heiny, and Kristen Hassmiller Lich. "Using an Adapted Community Readiness Assessment to Inform Vision Zero and Safe Systems Action." *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives* 23 (January 1, 2024): 100992. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2023.100992>.
- Kidwell, Clara Sue, and Alan R. Velie. *Native American Studies*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. https://books.google.com/books/about/Native_American_Studies.html?id=6GVYOEvmJU4C.
- Lyons, Orens, Peter Matthiessen, Daniel K. Inouye. *Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations, and the U.S. Constitution*, Clearlight Publishers, 1992.
- Mavrogenidou, Panagiota, and Apostolos Papagiannakis. "Exploring Community Readiness to Adopt Mobility as a Service (MaaS) Scheme in the City of Thessaloniki." *Urban Science* 8, no. 2 (June 2024): 69. <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci8020069>.
- Oral History Association. "Principles and Best Practices Glossary - Oral History Association," August 30, 2018. <https://oralhistory.org/best-practices-glossary/>.
- San Diego Association of Governments. "Tribal Lands in the San Diego Region." San Diego Association of Governments, April 2014. <https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/projects-and-programs/borders-and-interregional-collaboration/tribal-governments/tribal-lands-in-the-san-diego-region-map-2014-04-01.pdf>.
- San Diego Association of Governments, and Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association. "Intraregional Tribal Transportation Strategy." California Department of Transportation,

- January 2018. <https://ttap-center.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Caltrans-Intertribal-Transportation-Best-Practices.pdf>.
- “San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan.” San Diego, CA: San Diego Association Of Governments, October 2015. <https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/regional-plan/2015-regional-plan/2015-regional-plan-final.pdf>.
- Spencer, Joanna, Moya L. Alfonso, Kristen Harper, Debbie Bennett. 2012. "Assessing Changes in Community Readiness to Address Driving Under the Influence in Rural Georgia." Community Health Faculty Presentations. Presentation 52. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/commhealth-pres/52>
- Using Community-and Individual-level Readiness Models. Journal of Health Psychology. 2008; 13(5):639-643. doi:10.1177/1359105308090935
- Younging, Gregory. *Elements of Indigenous Style*. Brush Education, 2018.

Data Management Plan

Products of Research

Oral History
GIS StorMap

Data Format and Content

Oral History utilized Oral History Association guidelines to generate a co-constructed narration of regional experience, lessons learned, and recommendations about Tribal transportation and mobility in Southern California. Six out of a projected ten interviews were conducted, but due to technical issues, only four were recorded.

GISStoryMap was used to illustrate and create visual aids and audio support of the Oral History.

Data Access and Sharing

The General Public can access the research via SCTCA and SANDAG links to the research, and on the CITT-PSR archive of projects.

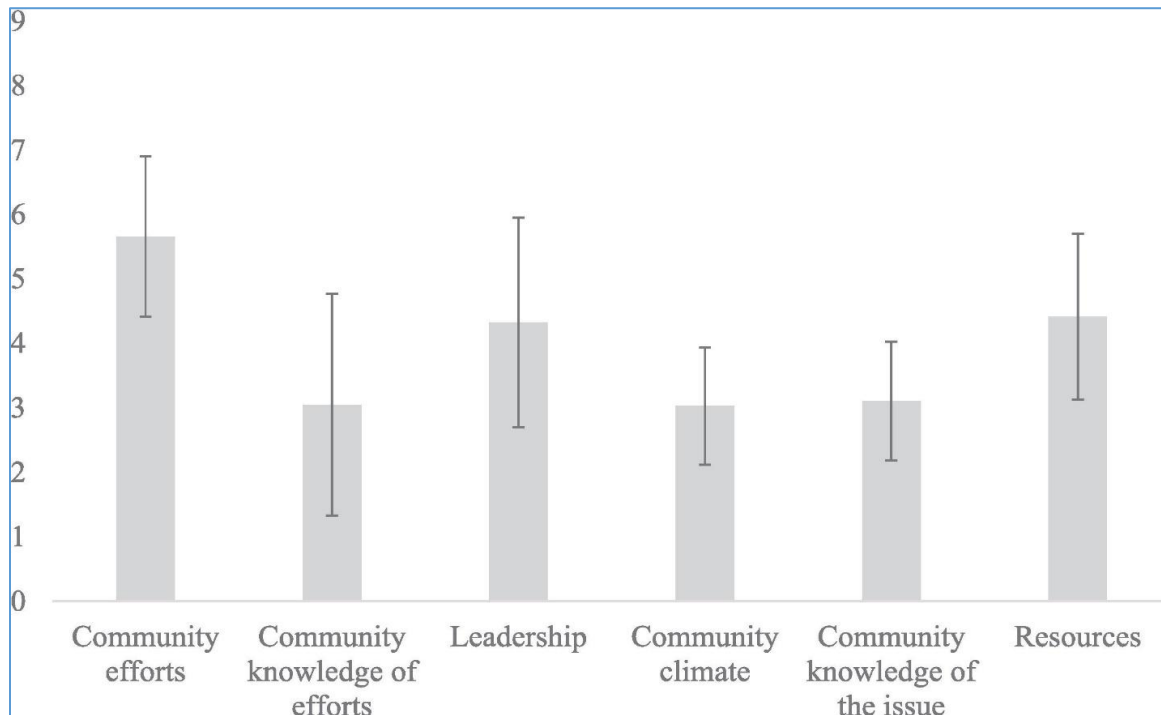
Reuse and Redistribution

There are no restrictions on the data usage as long as citations and credit are properly associated to the author and co-authors.

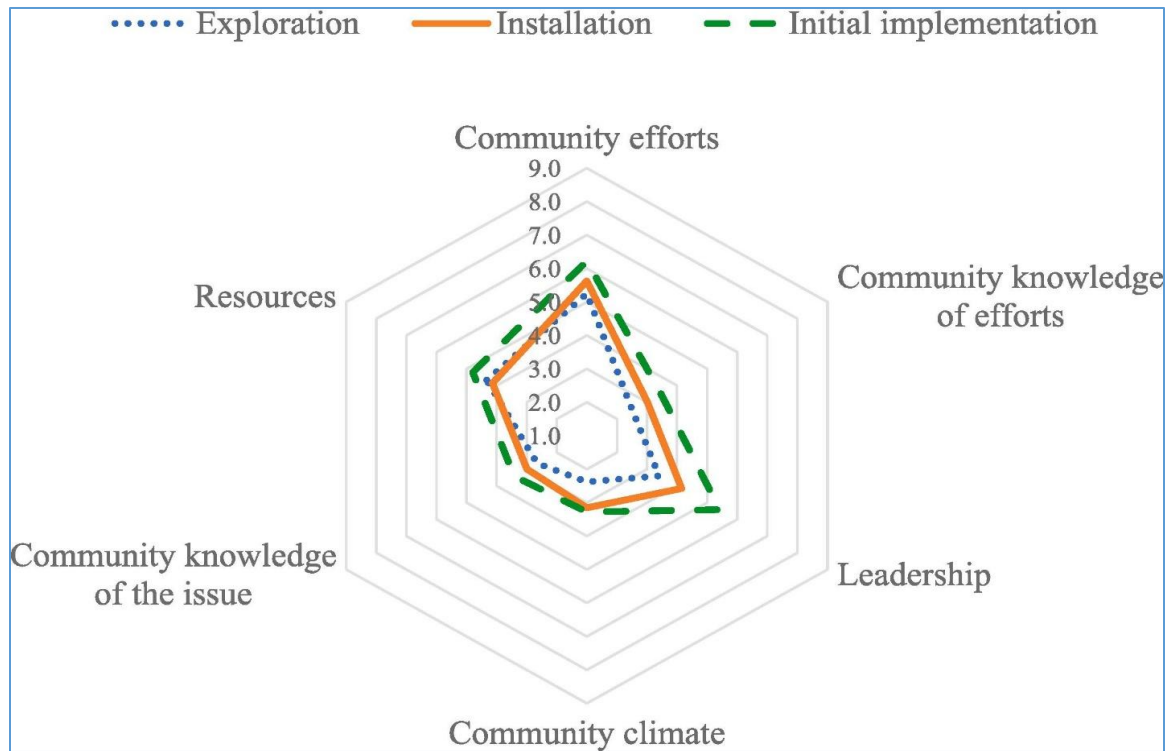
<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/G4HY0K>

Appendix A: Community Readiness Models

There is extensive literature validating the success of community readiness models in gauging and engaging specific communities regarding levels of awareness and support for the implementation of specific health and emergency preparedness programs and initiatives (Kakefuda et al., 2008); (Spencer et al., 2012). More recently Community Readiness models have been applied to transportation and infrastructure implementations to determine levels of social support (Hayati 2018) and readiness for adopting new systems as visualized by Keefe et al (2024) in the figures below.



Keefe et al (2024) visualize critical factors related to community readiness on a 9-point scale.



Keefe et al (2024) visualize the 9-point for community readiness in relationship to the phases of Exploration, Installation, and Initial implementation.

Appendix B: Interview Flyer

CSU LONG BEACH

INVITES YOUR PARTICIPATION IN AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT ABOUT TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY*

PARTICIPANTS MUST BE:

- 18+, FORMER AND/OR CURRENT TRIBAL LEADER, SCTCA REPRESENTATIVE, SANDAG EMPLOYEE, OR AGENCY PARTNER
- AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS BETWEEN OCTOBER 2023-JANUARY 2024

PARTICIPANTS MUST HAVE:

- SERVED ON SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION, PLANNING COMMITTEE OR TRIBAL WORK GROUP
- EXPERIENCE WITH TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION OR MOBILITY ISSUES

***APPROVED _____ BY THE CSULB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD.**

CONTACT

DR. THERESA GREGOR
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
PROGRAM IN AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES &
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

 **760-473-2012**

 PARTICIPANTS WILL BE COMPENSATED FOR THEIR INTERVIEWS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ORAL HISTORY.

 **THERESA.GREGOR@CSULB.EDU**





**Research is funded by the
Department of Transportation,
Pacific Southwest Region,
University Transportation Center**



Appendix C: Interview Letter of Introduction and Request



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES

Haawka (Hello) _____,

My name is Dr. Theresa Gregor, and I am an Associate Professor at California State University, Long Beach in the Program in American Indian Studies. I am researching and writing an oral history about Southern California Tribal Transportation of Mobility. The interviews from the study will be used to create an oral history that document gaps, lessons learned, best practices, and areas for improvement in the relationship and engagement that Tribes in San Diego have with regional county partners. The research will provide a deeper and complex understanding Southern California Tribal transportation needs. The CSULB Institutional Review Board approved my research protocol on October 5, 2023.

I am contacting you because of your work history and involvement with regional planning and transportation matters with the San Diego Association of Governments through your time as a policy consultant with SCTCA. I am reaching out today to interview you about your work and experience serving on regional and transportation planning committees. If you are interested in participating in this project, I would like to arrange 60–90-minute sessions with you via Zoom/Teams meeting, over the phone, or face-to-face meeting, depending on your availability.

If you prefer not to be recorded, we can simply have a conversation, and I will transcribe notes by hand during our meeting. In either case, you will receive a copy of my transcribed notes, a digital copy of any recorded materials if you request them, as well as an advance copy of the oral history to review prior to its submission for presentation. In addition, I can compensate you up to \$300 for your participation in the oral history.

I look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached at (760) 473-3012 or by replying to my campus email: Theresa.Gregor@csulb.edu.

Eyaay ehan, my heart is full,

Dr. Theresa Gregor

Appendix D: Interview Consent Form

Project Title: Southern California Tribal Transportation Oral History of Mobility
Principle Investigator: Dr. Theresa Gregor | Theresa.gregor@csulb.edu | Phone: (760) 472-2012

California State University, Long Beach | Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90804

Dear Community Member:

You are being invited to participate in an oral history research study. This research project will utilize an oral history approach based on American Indian Studies disciplinary protocols and relationships to interview tribal leaders, workers, and key personnel engaging in tribal transportation and mobility work in San Diego County. The interviews of tribal leaders, past and present, and key tribal stakeholders in San Diego, will be used to create an oral history that document gaps, lessons learned, best practices, and areas for improvement in the relationship and engagement that Tribes in San Diego have with regional county partners. The research will provide a deeper and complex understanding Southern California Tribal transportation needs. If you decide to participate, I will ask you a series of pre-approved questions according to your affiliation as a tribal leader, SCTCA representative, or member of the San Diego County Association of Government's regional planning committee or Tribal transportation workgroup. The total time for your participation is expected to last 60-90 minutes for personal interviews, and 30-60 minutes of your own time to review and approve your interview recording, transcription, and a final oral history narrative. For your convenience, we can meet via telephone, Facetime, Zoom, Teams meeting, or another agreed upon teleconferencing application, or by email.

The risks to participating in this study include:

1. If your work is culturally sensitive or involved in an active lawsuit, you may be hesitant to answer certain questions due to concerns that they might jeopardize the community's larger project/goal.
2. You might fear that recordings may be distributed without your consent or taken out of context.
3. You may feel uncomfortable being called or perceived as the "expert" in the work/field you are contributing to due to a sense that your work is part of a deeper cultural calling, responsibility, or duty.

As the principal investigator, I will make every attempt to reduce these risks by:

1. Informing you that at any time you feel uncomfortable with a question, that you may skip to the next question, or refuse to answer any more questions.
2. Notifying you that you may use a pseudonym if you do not want to disclose your identity in the writing and publication of the article,
3. Informing you that all audio recordings will be stored in an encrypted file that is stored in the University-supported cloud with a secure password. In addition, all recordings will be destroyed after the article is published.
4. Informing you that at any time you can decide to not participate. In addition, upon request I can destroy all interview materials that you wish to not be included for publication.

There is an honorarium provided for each interview you provide in the oral history for your participation and your intellectual labor. After each interview, I will provide you with a gift card for \$100 (maximum of 3) to Target or Amazon (your choice). Gift cards are issued from the Office of Research and Economic Development and approved for your participation in this research project. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the CSULB Institutional Review Board (IRB) at IRB@csulb.edu, or call (562) 985-8147. An IRB is a committee that reviews research to ensure that the rights and welfare of research participants are protected.

Thank you,

Dr. Theresa Gregor

Signing this document means that all information has been explained to you orally, the investigator has answered any questions you have about the study and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

Name of Participant (Printed)

Participant Signature

Date

Please initial the appropriate box:

____ Yes, I agree to the audio recording.

____ No, I do not agree to the audio recording, but agree to handwritten notes.

Appendix E: Baseline Interview Questions

1. Can you please introduce yourself, including your tribal affiliation (if any), name, and current profession?
2. Do you reside within your traditional homeland or on your tribal reservation? If so, please name and describe it.
3. What is your understanding about past or present tribal transportation and mobility needs in San Diego County?
4. Did you serve on the SANDAG regional planning committee or tribal transportation workgroup? If so, how long, and what was your experience like serving on these committees? Can you describe how you view the process or relationship in working with SANDAG on Tribal issues?
5. What, if any, were the biggest obstacles and successes in your work with SANDAG on regional planning and transportation development?
6. What did you learn as a tribal representative on SANDAG's regional planning committee and/or tribal transportation workgroup?
7. In what ways do you use your Tribal cultural background/knowledge to further your work in regional planning and transportation?
8. What do you think you helped Tribal nations accomplish when you served on the SANDAG regional planning and/or transportation workgroup?
9. In what ways do you think the relationship with the SANDAG or the broader County of San Diego has been effective or not in working with Tribal Nations on regional planning and mobility issues? How do you think the process can be improved and/or sustained if you think it is working well already?
10. What is your vision of a resilient future for Tribal transportation and mobility needs in San Diego County?