

The National Summer Transportation Institute Program

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have established various educational initiatives. In general, the purpose of these initiatives is to address the need of a diverse workforce in the 21st century and to promote greater awareness of career opportunities within the transportation industry. One such program is The National Summer Transportation Institute (NSTI).

In 1991 representatives from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority Institutions of Higher Education (MIHEs) that were participating on a FHWA Task Force recommended that partnerships be established to increase the participation of HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic Serving Institutions in FHWA programs. The partnerships were required to have the active participation of an FHWA Division Office, a State transportation agency (STA), and a college or university.

In response to this recommendation, the FHWA South Carolina Division Office, the South Carolina Department of Transportation, and the South Carolina State University developed a transportation-focused career awareness initiative known as the “Summer Transportation Institute” (STI). This USDOT/FHWA educational initiative was designed to introduce secondary school students to all modes of transportation careers and encourage them to pursue transportation-related courses of study at the college and/or university level. In 1993, 20 ninth- and 10th-grade participants were involved. In 1995, the NSTI expanded to six HBCUs with 135 students. Eventually, after a 6 year pilot program the US Congress determined that the program was successful and in the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century* authorized funding for the “National Summer Transportation Institute” (NSTI). To date, the NSTI Program has expanded from one university to more than 65 colleges and universities, with more than 9,000 students having participated in the program.

Here in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has remained focused on the original dual purpose of the NSTI program – to promote greater awareness of career opportunities within the transportation industry and to promote inclusion of Tribal Colleges and other MIHEs into the Federal-aid Highway Program.

There are only two MIHEs located in the State of Wisconsin, and WisDOT has a relationship with each of these two Tribal Colleges to provide a NSTI program. The College of Menominee Nation and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community have each successfully conducted a NSTI program for over ten years. Of the 34 tribal community colleges in the United States, two of the three tribal colleges that participate in the NSTI program are located here in Wisconsin.

The NSTI program is championed by the FHWA's Office of Civil Rights along with individual FHWA Division Offices, such as the FHWA Wisconsin Division Office in Madison. FHWA is the funding and governing agency for the NSTI, and formally established the program as a recognized educational initiative in 1998.

Each NSTI program is managed through the State Transportation Agencies, such as the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). WisDOT is responsible for providing technical assistance, guidance, training and support to participating institutions host sites. However the key to each NSTI program is the Host College. Through their hard work these Colleges make the each individual NSTI initiative a successful educational program.

The specific purpose of the NSTI program is to promote awareness of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) educational and career opportunities among disadvantaged and at-risk middle and high school students around the country. In addition to Federal funding and Host provided services, NSTI program can receive support from local sponsors, businesses, and other transportation stakeholders.

Participation in the NSTI is free for students who have an interest in learning more about the transportation industry, its various modes (e.g., highways, aviation, transit and maritime) and how they might pursue post-secondary education concentrating on some aspect of transportation, and the career opportunities therein. The NSTI program is typically two to four weeks in length. Host sites conduct both residential and non-residential programs and, to ensure a productive learning experience, classroom size is at least 15 students. Recruitment and registration is coordinated and managed by each local host site.

The NSTI program also supports the White House educational initiatives that directs Federal Agencies to identify and implement programs that will increase participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Asian and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (APIs) in the Federal Highway Administration and other federally sponsored programs.

In particular, there is [Executive Order 13270](#) which recognizes the unique relationship between the United States and Indian tribes as well as the critical role of Tribal colleges in Tribal communities. The EO establishes the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities to promote the inclusion of Tribal Colleges and Universities into Federally sponsored programs.

In addition, the Executive Order requires that Federal departments and agencies conduct outreach efforts that focuses on Native American and Alaska Native communities; promoting and encouraging the development of language, culture, and traditions, and educational efforts directed towards early childhood development and elementary and secondary students.

Resources (use links or Google “FHWA NSTI”):

FHWA NSTI Homepage <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/nsti.cfm>
FHWA NSTI Frequently Asked Questions Website (last modified May 18, 2012).
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/nsti_faq.cfm