

Summary Notes

DEI Special Session – Open Space Format

IBTTA 91st Annual Summit & Exhibition

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Bridging the Gap: Challenges and Opportunities in DEI – What is next and where do we go from here?

Session Facilitator: **Wayne Reed, AtkinsRéalis**

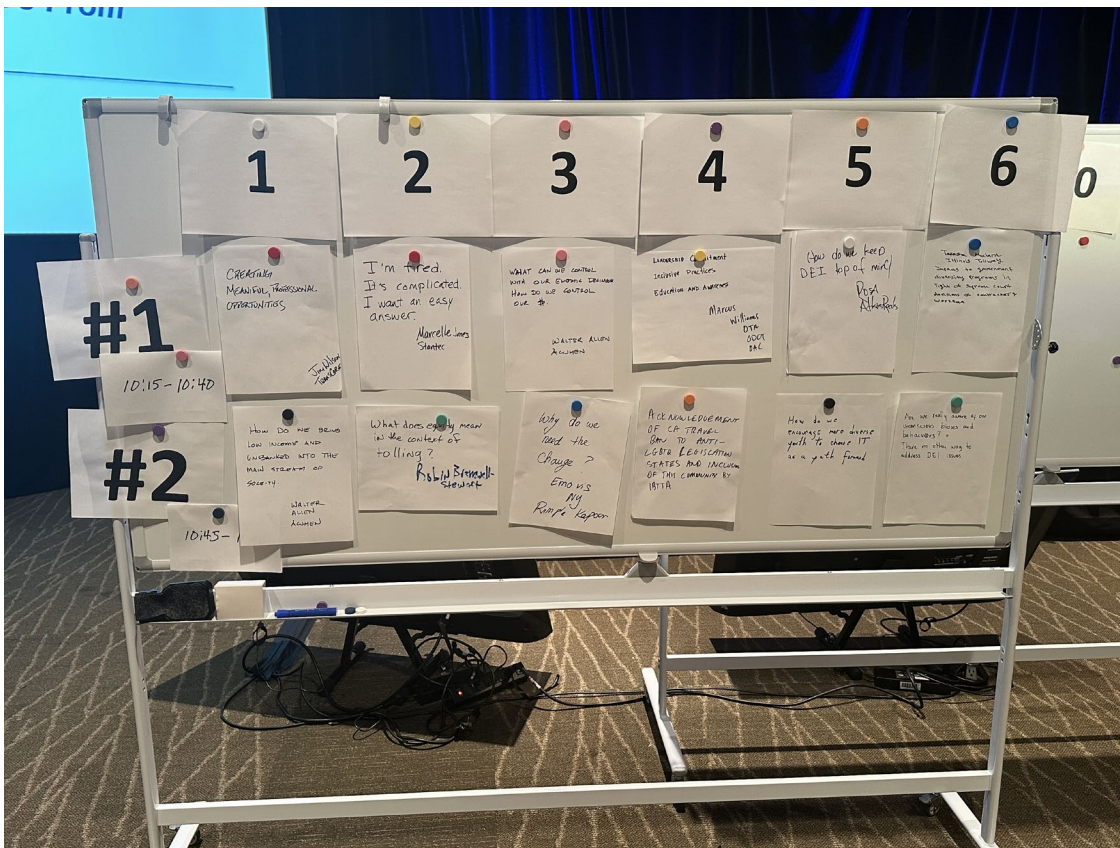


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Opening Remarks (10:00am – 10:15am)

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Open Space! Thank you for attending today's meaningful conversation on building a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace and industry. I am Wayne Reed, your facilitator for today's Open Space/Safe Space Conversation centered around our:

Theme: **Bridging the Gap: Challenges and opportunities in DEI...What is next and where do we go from here?**

We will develop our best thoughts around our theme's issues, opportunities, direction, and experiences during our time together.

I'm reminded of a powerful quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

'We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.'

His words remind us that diversity, unity, and respect are the thread that weaves our shared destiny. Our differences make us stronger, more innovative, more whole.

Transportation connects people and communities. Only when everyone has a seat at the table and access to the same opportunities can we build transportation systems that truly serve us all. That's why we're here today - to have an open, honest dialogue on how to make our workplace and industry more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

This theme is deeply personal for many of us, and I aim to create a safe, judgment-free space for open and honest dialogue.

Here is how this will work. First, this is a safe space. Our ground rules to make sure this remains safe are:

1. **Listen:** We will listen carefully and not interrupt. These discussions are dialogues, not a debate. Collaboration, common ground, understanding, and introspection are keys to a successful dialogue.
2. **Respect:** We agree to listen respectfully to each other without interruptions. Only one person speaks at a time. We agree to share the air equitably and include all

voices in the discussion. If you do not wish to share, feel welcome to sit with your thoughts if appropriate. But we challenge everyone to be courageous and share their thoughts.

3. **Personal Experience:** We will speak from our personal, individual experiences. We agree that no one should be expected to speak for their race, ethnicity, or other characteristics.
4. **Patience:** We agree to have patience with each other and acknowledge that we may be at different stages of learning the content and discussion topics.
5. **Privacy:** We agree this is a safe space; any private information shared shall remain confidential. After this event, you may share general ideas from the discussion, but you may not share the personal experiences of others unless permission is given.

Do we all agree with the safe space ground rules?

Great. Now Open Space....

In a few moments, I will ask you to identify any issue or opportunity you see around our theme,

Bridging the Gap: Challenges and opportunities in DEI...What is next and where do we go from here?

Give it a short title, write it down – with your name – and then announce it in front of the group at one of these microphones.

I emphasize giving your issue a short description of 10 words or less. Say what your topic is and post it in the Marketplace.

Make sure that you have some real passion for this issue and that it's not just a good idea for someone else to do.

You will be expected to take personal responsibility for the discussion.

That means saying where and when the group will meet, convening the group, and adding the results to the proceedings.

You may offer as many issues as you like, and if you don't see your issue on the wall at the end of the day, there is precisely one person to complain to: yourself.

Once all the issues are up, we will open the Marketplace, and everybody will join as few or as many groups as they desire. From there on out, you are in charge.

Even though open space is truly open, there are four principles and one law that we need to keep in mind.

The four principles are:

1. Whoever comes are the right people; a reminder that the group and configuration are also organized.
2. Whenever it starts is the right time, a reminder that ideas flow on their own schedule.
3. When it's over, it's over, a reminder to move on when the work is completed. Do the work, not the time.
4. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened; it is a reminder to be prepared to be surprised.

Open space also has one law, the law of mobility.

This law creates two possible new roles in open space called bumblebees and butterflies. Bumblebees are an extension of the law of mobility.

The law of mobility allows people to move from group to group as their interest changes.

The metaphor of the bumblebee is used to encourage movement, which, in effect, cross-pollinates the groups.

Ideas are carried from one group to the next and create new ideas. Butterflies are also an extension of the law of mobility.

Where bumblebees cross-pollinate, butterflies bring the power of observation and new ideas to the group.

Not everyone joins the groups in an open space.

Some form a group of one where the person contemplates the ideas created in the Marketplace and adds their thoughts to the pool of developing ideas.

Keeping the four principles in mind and the one law, it is time to get to work.

Along that line, there is one question to start.

What are the issues and opportunities around our theme (**Bridging the Gap: Challenges and opportunities in DEI...What is next and where do we go from here?**) for which you have a real passion and will take genuine responsibility?

And when you have identified an issue, give it a short title and write it down legibly, in large letters, and include your name on the sheet.

As soon as you're ready, announce your title and add it to the Marketplace. Don't wait to be asked; go when you're ready. Time and space are on a first-come, first-served basis.

The rest of you might take a look at the various offerings posted on the Marketplace and decide which group or groups you wish to join to learn or lend your expertise.

As you can see in the Marketplace, there are 12 spaces and time frames for your discussions. Many of the spaces meet right here in this room while others are outside of this room. There are signs clearly indicating the location of the other numbered spaces.

At 10:40 we will switch to the second timeframe 11:40 am, we will reconvene in this large circle for a debrief on your experience and discussions.

It may seem a little chaotic at first, but it turns out that chaos is the way the fields of the mind are plowed so that new ideas can grow.

From here on out, you are on your own.

The Marketplace is now open for you to announce your issue and post it in the Marketplace. Go when you are ready.

Session 1 (10:15 am – 10:40 am)

#1 - Creating Meaningful, Professional Opportunities

Group Facilitator: **Jim Wilson** – TransCore

As an introduction to the topic, our group discussed that one of the key approaches to getting exposure to upper management and, therefore, creating career opportunities was a willingness to play golf or attend after-hours social functions, but the approaches of the past are sometimes inequitable or inappropriate. The following is a list of ideas to create meaningful, professional opportunities for all employees and steps upper management must take to achieve diversity, Equity, and inclusion:

- Host Fireside Chats
- Mentorship and Sponsorship (Needs to be intentional)
- Pay attention to the data - it will highlight imbalances.
- Pay attention to the staff – they will tell you what you need to do.
- Evaluate the culture and structure - Mentorship accordingly. Creating opportunities is not "one-size-fits-all."
- Strategic approach to teaching DEI fundamentals and recruiting early (school-age)
 - Outreach
 - Role models
- Make it personal. Management needs to view a lack of organizational DEI as a failure to successfully run their business.

#2 - I'm tired. It's complicated. I want an easy answer.

Group Facilitator: **Marcelle Jones** – Stantec

Topic Leader comments: Our session discussed the mental toll associated with issues related to diversity, inclusion and equity. General consensus that people are overwhelmed in their daily lives and challenged to give attention to complicated matters. As the definition of “diversity” grows so does the tension as to which and how many groups should be or can be “accommodated”.

- I'm Tired:
 - Generational divide
 - Defining diversity
 - Operating from a place of fear
 - Evolving topics/issues and related responsibility
 - Respect

- It's Complicated:
 - Who is responsible for leading the charge?
 - Mandatory vs. Voluntary/Optional
 - Politics
 - Defining who is in the circle/table

#3 - What can we control with our Economic Decisions? How do we control our \$?

Group Facilitator: **Walter Allen** – Acumen

- Stand together.
- GOUT/ Public Policy/SBE - Support
 - Need the right people making decisions.
 - Not look at the impact.
- Leadership from Private.
- Diversity talent pool.
- NY City congestion pricing- study ahead of time
 - Impact
- Vote local community.
- It will cost.

#4 - Leadership Commitment, Inclusive Practices, Education and Awareness

Group Facilitator: **Marcus Williams** – Oklahoma Turnpike Authority

- Inclusive Practice
 - It must be the goal and mission.
 - The community the work will impact.
 - Scoring social Equity in procurement (consultant)
 - Break down to specifics to then scale out.
- Leadership commitment
 - Jointly look at HR and people served.
 - Still matters- EQUALITY.
 - Trust
- Education and Awareness
 - Why's
 - Common definition of DEI

#5 - How do we keep DEI top of mind?

Group Facilitator: Rosa Rountree – AtkinsRéalis

Our group discussion first recognized that DEI is essential and the value of having an inclusive community or organization that allows it to unleash its full potential. However, we took a moment to reflect on points in our lives where we felt excluded or unable to bring our authentic selves to a conversation. Those uncomfortable feelings of being on the outside looking in highlighted how vital inclusion is. By tapping into those experiences where we felt different or unaccepted, we can cultivate more empathy, courage, and vigilance to speak up when others may feel excluded. With greater awareness of what exclusion feels like, we can all more actively look for opportunities to model inclusive behaviors, interrupt biases, and keep DEI at the forefront of all we do.

Keep points discussed:

- **Realize opportunity.**
Recognize the immense opportunities for innovation, growth, and success that DEI brings when embraced authentically. Keep this motivating vision of the possibilities at the forefront.
- **Stop doing what you are doing - Interrupt the Status Quo**
Make a conscious choice to stop default behaviors and practices that perpetuate a lack of diversity and inclusion. Interrupt unconscious biases and past cultures.
- **Ask questions - carefully!**
Ask respectful but courageous questions to understand others' experiences. Listen intently. Seek diversity of input. Examine your blind spots through inquiry.
- **Insert yourself - Take Personal Responsibility.**
Look for opportunities to contribute individually to DEI efforts. Don't wait for others to insert inclusion - make it part of your daily behaviors and language.
- **Create the DEI culture - Set the Tone at the Top.**
Leaders must role model the DEI culture desired. This visibility keeps DEI central to the organization's operations and purpose.
- **Teach the Value**
Implement training at all levels on the immense value diversity brings and everyone's role in cultivating inclusion. Keep it Top of mind through education.
- **Discuss the Value**
Have candid, constructive dialogues around DEI challenges and progress in a safe space. Champion these conversations to bring awareness and accountability.
- **Be aware and Maintain vigilance.**
Stay alert to subtle biases creeping in. Notice areas of opportunity to improve. Keep DEI top of mind as an ongoing priority vs. a one-time initiative.

The path forward involves embracing opportunity, interrupting the status quo, taking responsibility at all levels, continuous learning, and courageously keeping DEI central to all we do.

#6 - Impacts to government diversity programs in light of Supreme Court decisions of Contractors and Workforce

Group Facilitator: **Takesha McClane** - Illinois Tollway

Session 6 with Takesha McClane discussed the potential impacts of recent Supreme Court decisions on government diversity programs and how these changes could affect both the workforce and contractors. Many government agencies are expected to review their Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs and state-certified minority programs in response to these decisions. The Supreme Court's rulings may lead to new policy and procedure changes within these programs.

One significant development mentioned was the SBA's 8(a) program, which was put on pending status for policy updates. The new requirement for all applicants, both new and existing, to submit a social disadvantage narrative is a direct result of these policy changes.

The discussion also touched on the potential workforce impacts. Companies that traditionally recruit from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) may see a decline in the representation of minority students in various professions such as engineering, medicine, and law. HBCUs play a vital role in producing African American professionals in these fields, contributing significantly to the workforce.

Additionally, the presentation highlighted that several states, including California, Michigan, Washington, Florida, Nebraska, Arizona, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma, have eliminated affirmative action through various means. It is suggested that other states may examine the standards and practices in place in these states and potentially adopt similar measures, further complicating the landscape of diversity programs and policies.

- Workforce Impacts
 - Lower recruitment of minorities from HBCU colleges (lawyers, doctors, engineers)
- Contracting impacts
 - 8A pending 4800
 - 7J
 - WOSB
 - Veteran
 - Hubzone
 - Service Disabled
- Promote Activities that are objective
- DBE - State - Burden of proof
 - Minority women

Session 2 (10:45 am – 11:30 am)

#1 - How do we bring low-income and Unbanked into the mainstream of society?

Group Facilitator: **Walter Allen** – Acumen

- Data/IPASS - Auto Reload/credit card
 - Possible to pay card
- Cashless society/PDS-7/11
 - Invoices/acct unable to
- Jobs vs housing
- Public bank - IPASS assist means testing
- Utilities model
- More options to pay
 - Apple/Google pay/PayPal/cash app /cash
- Remove barriers to have account
- Enrollment process
 - Better
 - Automatic
- Partnerships
 - Public transit
- Match.com > Business
- Fees :(?
- Bond commitments
- Higher tolls??
- Political fallout
- Transportation wallet
 - Pay 2% of income

#2 - What does Equity mean in the context of tolling?

Group Facilitator: **Robin Bramwell-Stewart**, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

- Quality of life impacts
- Benefits of inequality??
- What is the objective of equity program?
- How to assess costs to "real" users
- Using all modes to generate discounts
- Balancing cost vs. quality of life
- Focus on tolling vs. focus on community impacts

- Need input from affected persons
 - Listen
 - Follow-up
 - Document tangible steps
 - Iterate
- Getting information to the affected people in the way that works best for them
- Partner with community partners
 - Library
 - School systems
- Equity enforcement
 - Programs that meet customers 'needs
 - Do agencies understand enforcement program objectives
 - Service vs. collection at the CSC

#3 - Why do we need the change?

Group Facilitator: **Rimple Kapoor** – Emovis

- There is more to a person than just color, religion, etc.
- We invest on healthy operations of machines when they are broken but not our people
- Remark at workplace on regular basis/constant victimization
- Loss of energy that could be used in a more meaningful are
 - Less productive
- Everyone needs to understand the importance
- Organizational level DEI programs
- Color of community (build and keep)
- Intention behind it all the way at leadership level
- Unintentional actions/empathy
- Institutionalized and sustainable solution
- Making it a priority in every meeting of IBTTA
- Equity measure needs to be promoted according to cliff communities
- Payment methods for low-income people
- Reporting and analytics on data related to DEI problems
- Inclusivity all the way from the start of planning to operations to funding

#4 - Acknowledgment of CA travel ban to anti-LGBTQ Legislation States and Inclusion of this Community

Group Facilitator: **Rick DiTullio** - Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District

- This is the first time LGBTQ+ community issues were brought up to DEI mtg that we can recall
- Industry culture could be improved in acknowledgment
- How do we make this accessible to those who want to learn more and to potential allies
- Advance IBTTA as a safe space
- Acknowledging unseen diversity
- Need to meet expectations of modern workforce

#5 - How to encourage diverse youth to choose IT as a path forward

Group Facilitator: **Michael Shay** - Illinois Tollway

- Better quality instructors and partners in public schools
- Junior achievement in partners
- Career days
- Mentorships/ paid interns
 - HBCU Partnerships
- Find ways to bridge generational gap
- Make it relatable to diverse youth
 - Provide a connection between young professionals and youth
- Make the paths known
- "Cristo Rey" model
 - ATL, CHIC

#6 - Are we really aware of our unconscious behaviors? There's no other way to address DEI issues.

Group Facilitator: **Oscar Hernandez**, A2T Consultants

- Safety - create conditions
- Comfort
- Rules/triggers
 - Acknowledge
 - Identify benefits.
 - Decision making criteria.
- Training
 - "External" trainer
 - Top-down commitment
 - Embrace communality.

- Measure/ progress goals

Additional Event Summary Notes

Provided by Marcus Williams, Oklahoma Turnpike Authority

The challenges in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) stem from systemic biases, discrimination, and inequality that have been ingrained in societies for centuries. Some of the key challenges include:

1. **Resistance to Change:** Many individuals and organizations resist acknowledging and addressing systemic inequities, often due to fear of losing power or privilege.
2. **Lack of Awareness:** A significant challenge is the lack of awareness and understanding of different perspectives, experiences, and barriers faced by marginalized groups.
3. **Inclusive Culture:** Building an inclusive culture that values and respects diverse perspectives and experiences requires sustained effort and commitment.
4. **Representation:** Ensuring representation of marginalized groups across all levels of society, including leadership positions, remains a challenge.
5. **Bias and Discrimination:** Unconscious biases and discriminatory practices can hinder the progress of DEI initiatives, perpetuating inequalities.

However, DEI also presents numerous opportunities:

1. **Innovation and Creativity:** Diverse teams and inclusive environments foster innovation, as different perspectives bring new ideas and approaches to problem-solving.
2. **Enhanced Decision-making:** Inclusive decision-making processes, where diverse voices are heard and considered, lead to better outcomes and avoid groupthink.
3. **Talent Retention and Attraction:** Organizations that prioritize DEI are more likely to attract and retain diverse talent, leading to increased productivity and competitive advantage.

4. **Social Impact:** By promoting DEI, societies can work towards reducing systemic inequalities and creating a fairer and more just world.

To move forward, it is crucial to continue addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities. This involves:

1. **Education and Awareness:** Increasing awareness about the importance of DEI, its benefits, and the barriers faced by marginalized groups.
2. **Policy and Legislation:** Implementing and enforcing anti-discrimination policies and legislation that protect the rights of marginalized individuals.
3. **Inclusive Practices:** Adopting inclusive practices in recruitment, promotions, and decision-making processes to ensure fair representation and equal opportunities.
4. **Leadership Commitment:** Leaders must champion DEI initiatives, setting the tone from the top, and holding themselves accountable for progress.
5. **Continuous Learning and Improvement:** DEI efforts should be an ongoing process, with regular assessments, feedback, and adjustments to strategies.
6. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Collaboration between organizations, governments, and civil society is essential to drive meaningful change and share best practices.

By addressing these challenges and leveraging the opportunities, we can move towards a more inclusive and equitable future where diversity is celebrated and everyone has equal opportunities to thrive.

In the context of tolling and transportation, there are specific challenges and opportunities in achieving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Some of these include:

Challenges:

1. **Accessibility:** Ensuring that transportation infrastructure, including toll roads, is accessible to all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background or physical abilities.
2. **Affordability:** Addressing the potential disproportionate impact of tolling on low-income individuals who may struggle to afford toll fees, leading to limited access to certain routes or transportation options.

3. Representation: Ensuring diversity and equitable representation in transportation planning, decision-making bodies, and leadership roles within tolling authorities and transportation agencies.
4. Systemic Inequities: Identifying and addressing systemic biases and historical disparities that may have led to unequal access to transportation infrastructure or services.
5. Displacement and Gentrification: Recognizing the potential for transportation projects, including toll roads, to contribute to displacement and gentrification of marginalized communities.

Opportunities:

1. Equitable Access: Using tolling revenue to invest in improving transportation infrastructure and services in underserved areas, thus promoting equitable access to reliable and efficient transportation options.
2. Workforce Diversity: Promoting diversity and inclusion within tolling authorities and transportation agencies, creating opportunities for underrepresented groups to participate in planning, operations, and decision-making.
3. Community Engagement: Engaging with communities and stakeholders to understand their unique transportation needs and involving them in the decision-making process to ensure their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.
4. Sustainable Solutions: Utilizing tolling revenue to invest in sustainable transportation alternatives, such as public transit, biking infrastructure, and pedestrian-friendly spaces, to reduce dependence on private vehicles and mitigate environmental impacts.
5. Data-driven Approach: Leveraging data and technology to monitor and address transportation disparities, identify areas in need of improvement, and measure the impact of DEI initiatives.

Moving forward, it is crucial to prioritize DEI in tolling and transportation. This includes:

1. Data Collection and Analysis: Collecting disaggregated data on toll usage, transportation patterns, and demographics to identify disparities and inform targeted interventions.
2. Equitable Policies: Developing and implementing policies that prioritize Equity, affordability, and accessibility in tolling and transportation decision-making.

3. Collaboration and Partnerships: Collaborating with community organizations, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders to co-create solutions, address concerns, and ensure diverse perspectives are considered.
4. Education and Training: Providing education and training on DEI for tolling authorities, transportation agencies, and staff to foster a culture of Inclusivity and awareness of potential biases.
5. Evaluation and Accountability: Regularly evaluating the impact of DEI initiatives, setting measurable goals, and holding tolling authorities and transportation agencies accountable for progress.

By actively addressing these challenges and leveraging the opportunities, tolling and transportation can become more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all individuals and communities.