



# SMALL BUSINESS PRESS

Leveling the Playing Field to Provide Equal Opportunities for ALL

2024, Issue 2

## Civil Rights Deputy Director Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of the Small Business Press, a newsletter published quarterly by the Office of Civil Rights to share the latest information, pertinent articles, and updates to small, disadvantaged businesses. Small Businesses are vital Caltrans partners, and we cannot rebuild California's transportation system without you. We hope you find this information useful and informative.

David DeLuz  
Deputy Director of Caltrans Office of Civil Rights



## Small Business Development Branch

For the first time in Caltrans history, by March of 2025, the Office of Civil Rights' (OCR) *Small Business Development Branch* will implement a new Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Supportive Services Business

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## What is the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program?

Imagine working twice as hard to build a business, only to be denied opportunities to do business with the state because of apparent biases related to race, gender, or other factors.

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Email [erin.g.vontersch@dot.ca.gov](mailto:erin.g.vontersch@dot.ca.gov) with questions or to sign up for the *Small Business Press*

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# Caltrans Director's Call for Small, Disadvantaged Businesses.



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## Small Business Development Branch

Development Program to help all small businesses, DBEs, and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBE) increase their business capacity and long-term success. The branch will address all inquiries promptly, and deliver training events and workshops from elite industry specialists, with resources, networking opportunities, and tips on successful Caltrans bidding and contracting practices.

### The Branch will:

• Assist with DBE Certification	• Host Training and Networking Workshops
• Provide Access to Financial Software	• Deliver Strategic Business Plans

### Additionally, the Branch will work with partners to provide:

• Technical Training	• Network with Financial Assistance Services	• Bid Matching Help
• Help with Bonding and Insurance	• Help Firms Find Grants and/or Loans to Fund Their Businesses	

The Small Business Development Branch consists of a Program Manager who is the subject matter expert; three Program Specialists who act as small business “caseworkers” in their respective Caltrans regions; and two Program Analysts who assist with the day-to-day operations and inquiries from the DBE/Supportive Services inbox.

Since its development in November 2023, the branch has assisted 44 certified DBEs and 11 certified small businesses with inquiries related to certification assistance, contract procurement/bids, mentor-protégé relationships, and upcoming events and/or workshops.



"Office Chief **Marjani Rollins** leads the Caltrans OCR Small Business and Workforce Development Center, which assists small businesses and individuals from underserved communities to develop their skills, build their business, and start a career. She said, "This is the most rewarding position I've ever had. I love my job!"



"**Jasmine Edgar** is committed to diversifying and enhancing the Northern California business community through her Small Business Development Program Specialist role at Caltrans, OCR. Edgar has worked in the public sector for more than 10 years but says her current role – supporting small and disadvantaged businesses – is the most rewarding part of her career to date.



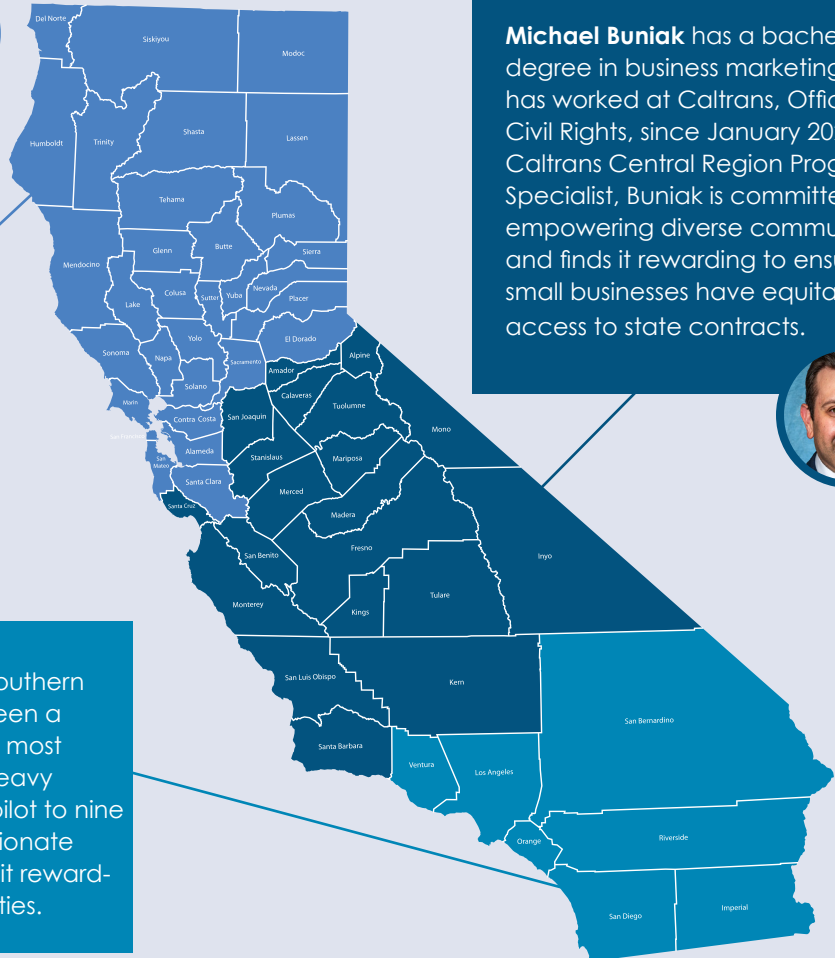
**Adriana Ring** is excited to serve as the Southern California Program Specialist. She has been a dedicated public servant for a decade, most recently expanding the Caltrans OCR Heavy Equipment Operator Academy from a pilot to nine academies across the state. Ring is passionate about working with the public and finds it rewarding to assist underrepresented communities.



**David Gunn** said it is incredibly fulfilling to know that our efforts directly impact the success and growth of small and disadvantaged businesses in need.



**Fanar Almosleh** said helping small, disadvantaged businesses gives him a strong sense of purpose. He said it's gratifying to see his support help them overcome challenges, and it is rewarding to know that he made a meaningful difference in their success.



**Michael Buniak** has a bachelor's degree in business marketing and has worked at Caltrans, Office of Civil Rights, since January 2020. As Caltrans Central Region Program Specialist, Buniak is committed to empowering diverse communities and finds it rewarding to ensure that small businesses have equitable access to state contracts.



Scan the QR code to Opt-In and receive alerts regarding upcoming Events, Training Workshops, Certification, Contract Opportunities, and much more.

## What is the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program?

This can feel invalidating and defeating and has happened to Disadvantaged Business Owners, including Steve Rhoades, Native American owner of S.T. Rhoades Construction.

**"It's really discouraging when you put the effort and time into a bid, only to find out that you were not considered – even when you had the best prices," Rhoades said.**

Disheartening reactions like this often result from [discrimination](#) – the prejudicial treatment of different categories of people based on their race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability – as opposed to seeing a business owner as a whole individual.

To offset this type of bias, the U.S. Department of Transportation created the [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\) program](#) in 1980, established by regulations under the authority of [Title VI](#) of the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#). The DBE program provides small businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals a fair opportunity to compete for federally assisted highway, transit, and airport-related transportation contracting.

In short, this program aims to level the playing field and remove barriers for small businesses to ensure that firms are not being discriminated against.

DBEs are [defined as](#) for-profit small businesses, with 51% owned by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual who controls management and daily operations. The program presumes women, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific, and Subcontinent Asian Americans to be socially and economically disadvantaged, but others can qualify on a case-by-case basis. To be [certified as a DBE](#), firms must prove that they fulfill all the program's requirements.

The DBE program creates specific opportunities for DBEs to elevate them to the level of work they would be expected to receive if discrimination did not exist.

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) DBE regulations require state and local transportation agencies to establish DBE participation goals, review the scopes of anticipated large prime contracts throughout the year, and establish contract-specific DBE subcontracting goals. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part [26.45\(b\)](#) specifies that each state must also demonstrate evidence of the availability of ready, willing, and able DBEs in calculating its goal. Every state department of transportation contract that has a DBE goal associated with it carves out and specifies opportunities for women and minority-owned contractors to participate.

Every three years the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) sponsor disparity studies to analyze and document the existence of discrimination that results in disparities in government contracting. Caltrans, which currently has a goal to

**As of August 2024, Caltrans' DBE participation was 22.45% – just above its 2022-2024 DBE Program goal of 22.2%. The new triennial DBE goal will be announced in the fall of 2024 and will be effective through federal fiscal years 2025-2027.**

award 22.2% of contracts to DBEs, uses the [disparity study](#) (noted in 49 CFR 26.45[c][3]) to analyze the marketplace conditions and establish a new overall DBE goal every three years. This in-depth, yearlong study measures the prevalence, significance, and scope of discrimination – if any – in the marketplace and calculates a DBE goal to offset it.

As of August 2024, Caltrans' DBE participation was 22.45% – just above its 2022-2024 DBE Program goal of 22.2%. The new triennial DBE goal will be announced in the fall of 2024 and will be effective through federal fiscal years 2025-2027.

Rhodes said he also owes Caltrans a "Thank you," for the DBE program, which gives small businesses owned by a disadvantaged individual – like him -- a fair opportunity to compete for federally funded transportation contracts.

"That's huge in helping companies get projects," Rhoades said. I don't think small, disadvantaged businesses would get the work they do without the federal percentage goals. In fact, I don't think a lot of the small businesses would be in business without these goals."



Northern California Native American Steve Rhoades owns Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) S.T. Rhoades Construction.

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For more information on the U.S. DOT DBE Program, visit: [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\) Program | US Department of Transportation](#)

For questions, please email [DBE.Certifications@dot.ca.gov](mailto:DBE.Certifications@dot.ca.gov) or [DBE.Compliance@dot.ca.gov](mailto:DBE.Compliance@dot.ca.gov).





# New Regulations

This year, the U.S. Department of Transportation updated the Federal Regulations that govern the [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\) program](#). This Congressionally mandated program was created more than 40 years ago to address and remedy the continuing effects of past discrimination against small businesses owned and controlled by minorities, women, and other socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and continues today to prevent and address ongoing discrimination.

The updated rules were designed to improve provisions for program participants, reduce burdens on firms and recipients, grow firm capacity and owner wealth, and improve program integrity, visibility, and data collection.

## The key changes include:

- Streamlining the DBE certification and eligibility process
- Adjusting the personal net worth (PNW) cap for inflation for small business owners. This now excludes retirement assets from the calculation.
- Formalizing guidance establishing successful COVID-19 flexibilities such as virtual on-site visits, to conserve certification and firm resources
- Modernizing the rules for counting DBE material suppliers' participation and clarifying terminology
- Making technical corrections and other updates, such as expediting interstate reciprocity.
- Expanding recipient reporting requirements to USDOT to gain greater knowledge of DBE characteristics, bidding/solicitation practices and utilization, and the overall program impact
- Strengthening monitoring and prompt payment requirements

A summary table of the final rule can be viewed at: <https://www.transportation.gov/DBEFinalRule> .



## Pull out Facts

The Caltrans Office of Civil Rights (OCR) sets small, disadvantaged, and disabled veteran business project goals, certifies Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), oversees the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Infrastructure Program, analyzes data, develops the workforce, provides outreach and supportive services to level the playing field and provide equal opportunities for ALL.

### Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program:

Caltrans has an office that certifies businesses that are eligible for the [DBE program](#). This certification helps small, disadvantaged businesses compete fairly on federally funded projects.

For federal fiscal year 2023-24, Caltrans OCR's [DBE Certification](#) Office is on pace to process more than 500 DBE applications and continues to confirm DBE eligibility for over 3,100 firms. While staffing has remained the same, the workload has increased 68% over last year's numbers.

This calendar year, Caltrans launched its triennial FHWA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA)-sponsored **Disparity Studies** to advance equity and measure the difference between how many minority contractors are available compared to how many were used on contracts. The FHWA study analyzes contracts awarded between January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2023, and the FTA analyzes contracts awarded between October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2023. These are in-depth, year-long studies that determine the FHWA and FTA DBE goals on construction, procurement, and transit services for the next three years going forward. For more information, visit <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/disparity-study>.

### Data:

As of August, in federal fiscal year 2023-24, Caltrans awarded 294 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) assisted contracts, valued at over \$3.4 billion. Of that, Caltrans committed more than \$771 million (or 22.45%) of its contracts to DBEs.

Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, Caltrans expenditures totaled \$2.5 billion in state-funded

contracts. Of that, certified Small Businesses (SBs) participated in more than 35% and received \$899 million. Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBs) participated in more than 3% of contracts and were awarded nearly \$76 million.

### Outreach:

Caltrans hosts free educational [outreach events](#) throughout the state, including:

- A free Southern California Alliance Calmentor Fall Architectural and Engineering (A&E) Calmentor event to share upcoming contracting opportunities and develop new and existing networks from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. November 1, 2024, at 1750 East 4th Street, Santa Ana, CA 92705.
- A free Northern California Procurement Fair presented by the Caltrans North Region Small Business program in partnership with the Department of General Services (DGS) from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on November 20, 2024, at 707 3rd Street, West Sacramento, CA 95605.
- A free Resource Fair from 2 to 5 p.m. on February 26, 2025, at the Clifton Community Center at 300 Centennial Way, Tustin, CA 92780.

Caltrans also partners on events including:

- Caltrans Small Business Council will host its regular meeting virtually from 8:30 a.m. to noon, Friday, November 15, 2024.
- A free [DBE Certification Zoom Workshop](#) with California Capital APEX Accelerator from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. November 21, 2024.
- The 2nd Annual California Supplier Diversity Symposium will be hosted by the California Statewide Coalition on Diversity Initiatives, which includes Caltrans, on March 13, 2025. This event increases the economic impact of small and diverse businesses by expanding their access to business resources and procurement opportunities.

For the latest information, visit the Caltrans Office of Civil Rights [Calendar of Events](#).

## Deputy Director Spotlight

### Empowering Communities, Changing Lives

On the first day of fourth grade, David DeLuz and his twin brother, Craig, faced a harsh welcome after moving four miles from Richmond, California to El Sobrante. A group of local boys jumped them because of the color of their skin - a harsh introduction into world colored by race. This marked the beginning of a lifelong journey filled with challenges and triumphs.



David DeLuz

"I've been threatened, jumped, slighted, and denied opportunities because of my race," recalled DeLuz, an African American born and raised in the East Bay Area. "But I was taught to never let that stop me from working hard to earn what I want out of life."

He said he knew his path wouldn't be easy, recalling his parents often preaching to him, "You have to work twice as hard to get half as far." This sage wisdom became his driving force, fueling his quest for academic and professional excellence, which helped him turn his adversities into motivation.



DeLuz used education to level his playing field. He earned a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism, a master's degree in public policy and administration, and another master's degree in politics, while also studying economics. These achievements opened doors, allowing him to break barriers and build bridges within the communities he serves.

As the former Director of Strategic Initiatives for the California School Boards Association, DeLuz championed funding high-quality equitable education for every child, and spearheaded innovative workforce housing efforts on surplus school land. During his tenure as President and CEO of the Greater Sacramento Urban League, he supported small, minority businesses while promoting self-reliance, personal growth, and community empowerment. At the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, DeLuz spearheaded re-entry initiatives addressing education, employment, and support networks—three pillars critical for those reintegrating into society.

Since August 2020, DeLuz has been at the helm of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE), small business, and External Equal Employment Opportunity programs as the Caltrans Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Deputy Director. His mission: to extend the same support and opportunities he once sought.

"When you provide someone a skill and support system, you are empowering them to take advantage of opportunities to change their lives," DeLuz emphasized. He understands the urgency for Caltrans to nurture and encourage small, minority firms to participate in projects. "Our job at OCR is to fulfill that need. My personal experiences are foundational to my commitment to this work."

Under his leadership, the program has flourished, for the first time surpassing \$1 billion in contracts to firms owned by people of color and women. But DeLuz remains focused on future goals. He envisions California having the nation's best small and DBE programs, knowing there is still much work ahead.

"We want to make sure that our small and disadvantaged business owners feel seen and heard. They deserve our time and support to reach their goals," DeLuz said. "Caltrans' commitment to delivering for the people of California requires us to not only deliver projects on time and on budget, but to also ensure that EVERY CALIFORNIAN who is ready, willing, and able to work on our project has the opportunity – and the resources – to do so, free from discrimination."

In doing that, DeLuz said, "I want our team to be remembered as passionate, fair, and effective advocates who made a difference."

**"I want to be remembered as a passionate, fair, and effective advocate who made a difference."**



## Business Spotlight Introduction

The Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (**Senate Bill (SB) 1, Beall, Chapter 5, Statutes of 2017**) required Caltrans to increase outreach to increase disabled-veteran, minority; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) contractors to increase their participation on Caltrans projects.

The bill referenced the federal [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program](#), which is designed to level the playing field for African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific and Subcontinent Asian Americans, and women, who are presumed to be socially and economically disadvantaged, but others can qualify on a case-by-case basis.

The Caltrans [Office of Civil Rights](#) – known as OCR – strives to increase the participation of those groups through [workforce development](#), [outreach](#), [education](#), [supportive services](#), and more.

As part of this effort, please read spotlight articles on Disabled-Veteran Business Enterprise, Synergy Traffic Control, Inc., for Disability Employment Awareness Month this October; DBE GR Sundberg, Inc., for National American Indian Heritage Month in November; and DBE, ActiveWayz Engineering, Inc., for African American Heritage Month in February.

### Disabled Veteran Spotlight

"Synergy Traffic Control"

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### Native American Spotlight

"Native Engineering"

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### African American Spotlight

"Building Safe, 'Active Ways' to Travel"

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## Synergy Traffic Control

In conjunction with October being Disability Employment Awareness Month, Caltrans is spotlighting Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Synergy Traffic Control, Inc. to showcase Caltrans' contractors' diversity.



Kenny Jones

The core values of the [United States \(U.S.\) Navy](#) are honor, courage, and commitment. Those values also serve small, disabled-veteran-owned businesses.

In 1992, when Kenny Jones finished his third year of service in the U.S. Navy, he started working for Toomey Industries, where he learned everything about traffic control safety from the ground up.

Highway construction workers have one of the [most dangerous](#) jobs in America, making traffic control a critical – but still dangerous component of highway construction.

In January 2008, Jones founded [Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Synergy Traffic Control, Inc.](#)

The Navy veteran exemplifies honor by being fair and truthful; courage by fulfilling a traffic safety need – although dangerous; and commitment, by putting in the hours needed to start up a small business.

“When I first started, I used to stay up until 3 a.m. sending out [capability statement] faxes to prime contractors,” Jones said. “I would work in the field all day, shower, and go back out to help my three employees. I didn’t have much credit, and I appreciated my employees who sacrificed alongside me.”

Jones, who is an African American, hires all ethnicities. He said he worked hard to give his kids, now 28, 20, and

18, a future. His wife, oldest child, cousin, and cousin’s husband all work at Synergy now.

He said the biggest help to starting his business was the [United Contractors \(UCON\)](#), [Associated General Contractors \(AGC\)](#), [Laborers International Union \(LIUNA\)](#), the [American Public Works Associations](#), and Caltrans contractor [outreach events](#).

“We like to stay abreast of changes within Caltrans or in the industry,” Jones said. “Caltrans and the associations are up to date on the latest topics and help with networking.”

He said his business is awarded 10 out of every 20 projects he bids on. He recommends that new businesses find their niche by thinking outside the box, offer services other companies don’t want to do, be persistent, and build relationships with project managers, estimators, and business owners.



Kenny Jones stands in the middle of his Synergy Traffic Control, Inc. operations managers: Salma Servin, Norbert Lofe, Ranique Dotson, Lilly Menchaca, and Nick, Fern, and Kay Men.

It’s been a journey,” Jones said. “Now we have quite a few jobs: one with Skanska on State Route 57, one with Security Paving [Company, Inc.] in Bakersfield, and one at Big Bear with VSS International. I have a good crew in the field and a good crew in the office. It is fulfilling knowing we provide safety for the public and allow contractors to get home to their families every night.”

Visit Caltrans’ Civil Rights program webpage to get certified as a [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#), or visit the Department of General Services [Cal eProcure](#) website for information on [Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise or Small Business Certification](#).



## Native Engineering

*In conjunction with National American Indian Heritage Month in November, Caltrans is spotlighting Disadvantaged Business Enterprise GR Sundberg, Inc., to showcase Caltrans' subcontractors' diversity.*

Yurok Native American Garth R. Sundberg said he worked in construction for 40 years before creating a small business in 2008.

His son, Randy Sundberg, had just earned his contractor license – even before he graduated from Boise State University, Idaho – and they started [GR Sundberg, Inc.](#)

The business wins an average of one out of every 10 bids submitted and does all aspects of general engineering, including paving, excavating, underground utilities, storm drains, and more. They are based out of Arcata but work throughout Humboldt, Del Norte, Trinity, and Mendocino counties.

“Generally, small business owners start out working for someone else because it is hard to get into the business,” Garth Sundberg said. “You have to get your license and insurance. You have to buy equipment, get credit, build bonding. – it just takes a long time to do it all.”

Randy Sundberg said he went to the [Caltrans website](#) to look for jobs and found them on his own.

“You had to be proactive,” he said.

“You had to be proactive,” he said.

Lucky for them, he is. GR Sundberg, Inc. won its first Caltrans job in 1998 because Randy Sundberg had signed the company up to do [emergency](#) repair work.

He also took GR Sundberg, Inc. through the process of getting certified as a [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#) (DBE), which helps them get on larger contracts with prime contractors that need to meet DBE goals.

“We truly are a native-owned corporation,” said Randy. “We have our [DBE] certification, but we didn’t start out as a minority-owned business. We started out as a contractor – who happened to qualify as a DBE as well. It’s a little bit of a bonus for us and it’s helped us grow our business.”

Garth Sundberg is the chairman of the [Trinidad Rancheria](#) and they hire fellow Native Americans because they know the locals and the country. “There are a lot of good [Native American] workers up here,” Garth said.



Randy Sundberg

“

We truly are a native-owned corporation,” said Randy. “We have our [DBE] certification, but we didn’t start out as a minority-owned business. We started out as a contractor – who happened to qualify as a DBE as well. It’s a little bit of a bonus for us and it’s helped us grow our business.”

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Visit Caltrans' Civil Rights program webpage to get certified as a [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#), or visit the Department of General Services [Cal eProcure](#) website for information on [Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise](#) or [Small Business Certification](#).





## Building Safe, 'Active Ways' to Travel

In conjunction with African American Heritage Month in February, Caltrans is spotlighting Disadvantaged Business Enterprise ActiveWayz Engineering, Inc. to showcase Caltrans' contractors' diversity.



**A**dmas Zewdie was born and raised in Ethiopia, Africa, and came to the United States (U.S.) in 1998.

He earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia in 1996, his Master of Business Administration from Haas School of Business at U.C. Berkeley in 2009, and is a licensed Professional Engineer in the state of California.

Before coming to the US, Zewdie worked as a bridge engineer for an Ethiopian government-owned highway design firm. After he came to the U.S., he worked 12-hour night shifts on an IBM assembly line until he transitioned to a transportation-focused civil engineering career.

Zewdie spent 17 years working for a mid-sized engineering consulting company, and in 2016 he founded [ActiveWayz Engineering, Inc.](#) His company specializes in engineering pedestrian, biking, and other active, healthy transportation alternatives. The firm provides plans, specifications, and estimates of different transportation options for cities, counties, Caltrans, and other public agencies.

He said quality, delivery, competence, and networking are all important elements to getting selected for a Caltrans project's engineering team. Attending Caltrans' local Architectural and Engineering (A&E) firm

[Mentor-Protégé Program](#) helped Zewdie get connected when he founded ActiveWayz Engineering in Santa Clara.

"We have formed relationships with larger firms committed to helping us grow our firm, professional network, and we have gained valuable experience on Caltrans projects," Zewdie said. "It also helps to have a specialized niche so you can support larger firms and supplement their efforts – rather than compete with them."

He said as a small, [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\)](#), the required financial documentation has been his biggest obstacle.

"It is a tremendous amount of paperwork for small businesses," Zewdie said. "The bigger firms have dedicated resources for that. As a DBE, we want to spend our time engineering projects and solving problems – that's what we love to do and why we pursue this."

**"It is a tremendous amount of paperwork for small businesses," Zewdie said. "The bigger firms have dedicated resources for that. As a DBE, we want to spend our time engineering projects and solving problems – that's what we love to do and why we pursue this."**

That is why, on April 9, 2024, the U.S. Department of Transportation modernized its DBE program regulations with less prescriptive rules. (See "New Rule" article, or [DBE and ACDBE Final Rule | US Department of Transportation](#) for more information)

"As a small, disadvantaged business owner, I appreciate that Caltrans makes sure that prime consultants come through with their DBE commitments to make sure the DBEs on the teams actually do the work on the team."

Visit Caltrans' Civil Rights program webpage to get certified as a [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#), or visit the Department of General Services [Cal eProcure](#) website for information on [Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise](#) or [Small Business Certification](#).

## Resources

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Workforce Development Branch (WDB) offers [Supportive Services](#) to OJT Heavy Highway Construction Trades Academy pre-apprenticeship and Heavy Equipment Operator Pilot Program graduates. As of August 2024, 23 of the 40 graduates have secured employment in various construction trades. Starting in January 2025 in southern California, the OJT/SS HEO/Heavy Highway Construction program is deploying academies statewide. For more information, email [OJT.SS@dot.ca.gov](mailto:OJT.SS@dot.ca.gov) or [DBE.SS@dot.ca.gov](mailto:DBE.SS@dot.ca.gov)

In 2024, Caltrans rolled out a [statewide Construction Mentor Protégé Program \(CMPP\)](#), which will start a new cycle in January 2025. This program enhances technical skills and knowledge, developing and enabling small and disadvantaged construction companies to compete for Caltrans projects.

Here are some photos of the 85 2024 graduates and their support teams:



**Top row, left to right:** Greg Berry, Caltrans North Region Construction Manager; Matt Brady, Caltrans District 1 Director; Antoinette and Dave Donnelly, American Traffic & Safety, Inc.; Adhab Abdullah, Lamassu Utility Services; and Beau Blume, Anvil Builders, Inc.

**The second left to right:** Michael Kever, Caltrans Chief Deputy Director; Raja Ponniah, Kiewit; Brian and Amy Foster, North State General Engineering; Sergio Aceves, Caltrans District 3 Director; Hilary Sherman, President of California Traffic Safety; Abbigail Brown, President of CPM Logistics; Brandon Risso, Kiewit; and James Flanagan, JK Flanagan Construction.

**Third row left to right:** Carl Berexa, Caltrans Engineer; Dave Moore, Caltrans District 2 Director; Annette Conley, Ghilotti Construction; John Mixon, LB&M Construction; Les Converse, Converse Construction, Inc.; Michelle Welliver, Flatiron; Adam Lopez, STS Traffic Solutions; and Ryan Offins, Offins General Engineering.

**Front row left to right:** Scott Edwards, Granite; Lester and Renee Brooks, L&B Metal Product Fabrication; Monique Quam, Ghilotti Construction; Nicole England, Teichert Construction; Alli Tiznado, Delta Concrete; Cindy Ma, CPM Logistics; Bonny Nyaga, Caltrans Construction DBE-Small Business Enterprise Support Manager; Amanda Andersen, Caltrans District 2 Small Business Liaison; Stacie Gandy, Caltrans District 3 Small Business Liaison; and Robynn Spence, Caltrans District 3 Small Business Liaison.



**From left to right:** Bonny Nyaga, Caltrans Construction DBE-Small Business Enterprise Support Manager; Scott Eades, Caltrans District 5 Director; Jason Theriault, Teichert; Arsenio Marcelo, Teichert; John Boies, Granite; Diana Layseca, Bess Utility Solutions; Brian Larinan, Granite; David Pickering, David Construction & Management Inc.; Rebecca Ponce, OP General Framing; Mike Lew, Caltrans; Christy Ambrose, CPM Logistics LLC.; Richard Mysercough, Caltrans District 5 Small Business Liaison; Tim Campbell, Caltrans; Sal Duran and Miguel Contreras, Magellan Construction; Alexander Santamaria, Santamaria Concrete; Chrystal and Brian Joseph, Joseph Engineering; and Cindy Ma, CPM Logistics.





Caltrans Director Tony Tavares, center, stands with the graduating Central California District 10 Construction Mentor Proteges and supporting Caltrans staff.



**Back row, from left to right:** Jason Mordhorst, Hazard Construction; Victor Mercado, Caltrans District 11 champion; Dwayne Henry, Moor Electric Inc.; Donna Berry, Caltrans Chief Engineer; Ty Haga, California Commercial Coatings Inc.; and Brad Olson, Griffith Company.

**Front row, from left to right:** Bonny Nyaga, Caltrans Construction DBE-Small Business Enterprise Support Manager; Jannette Carter, Flatiron West, Inc.; Everett Townsend, Caltrans District 11 Acting Director; Margie Perez, Caltrans District 11 Construction Deputy Director; Eric Meisgeier, Stacy and Witbeck, Inc.; Russell Glenn, R.E. Glenn Plumbing; and Rebecca Unter, CPM Logistics, LLC.

## Quick Links:

- Learn How to [Contract with Caltrans](#)
- See Upcoming Architectural and Engineering (A&E) Work on the [A & E Look Ahead Report](#)
- Register for [Caltrans' Bidding Connect](#) Portal
- See [Current Construction Projects Advertised](#)
- Click Quick Links on [Cal eProcure](#) to find all small business solicitations and past state purchases.
- Caltrans' [Opt-In](#) Feature Allows Small Businesses to connect with Primes
- Find your District Small Business Liaison at this [link](#).

## Additional Resources:

[Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers \(APTAC\)](#) provide free advice on all aspects of selling to the federal, state, and local governments. Find your local agency on the link to get started.

[Small Business Development Centers](#) throughout California counsel and train business owners to start, run, and grow their firms. Find your local center for assistance today.

The [Construction Resource Center](#) provides hands-on technical assistance, eLearning modules, educational materials, and mentorship programs to contractors, tradespeople, and future construction professionals.

Builders Exchanges, including the [Bay Area Builders Exchange](#), [Humboldt Builders Exchange](#), [Sacramento Regional Builders Exchange](#), [Golden State Builders Exchange](#), and [Central California Builders Exchange](#) help business owners find more work.

Email [erin.g.vontersch@dot.ca.gov](mailto:erin.g.vontersch@dot.ca.gov) with questions or to sign up for the *Small Business Press*