



Office of Civil Rights

Building a Better World

Caltrans Office of Civil Rights is spotlighting TSI Engineering, Inc. for South Asian Heritage Month (July 18 to August 17) to showcase Caltrans' contractors' diversity.

In 2000, [University of Engineering & Technology, Lahore](#) graduate and Pakistan Project Engineer Maqsood Ali, moved his four young kids and wife to America and started all over.

"In America, no one wanted to offer me a job at the higher — or even lower level [in project management]," he said. "I used to search for coins to put gas in my vehicle."

But Ali — a determined subcontinent Asian American and faithful Muslim — pursued the [American Dream](#). In 2002, he passed the California Board and Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors Professional Engineering exam. He worked at a Geotechnical company in southern California for three years before moving to Sacramento. There, he worked for an environmental company while attending [California State University, Sacramento](#), where he graduated with a master's degree in civil engineering in 2006.



But his struggles continued. He repeatedly applied for different jobs in different parts of the state. "They did not want to offer a job to me because my experience was from another country," he said. "Then I thought, 'I have a combination of experience in construction management, geotechnical, environmental, and structural fields, so I should open my own business.'"

On January 12, 2009, Ali opened [TSI Engineering, Inc.](#) construction company in his garage. At a Caltrans [outreach](#) event, he learned about the [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#) (DBE) program for socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. He decided to apply for DBE certification to help him get on contracts.

It was at that time that he also met Andrew Tagg, now Senior Vice President of [First Northern Bank](#), who helped Ali with small business development and lending.

Ali's family grew to six children before his company, TSI Engineering, Inc. landed its first Caltrans Minor B project to install an ethanol tank in Modesto in 2009.

"I am so thankful for Caltrans. Sometimes I cannot stop my feelings and I start crying," he said. "If Caltrans didn't give me this Minor B project, I wouldn't be able to eat. I completed it in two months and got \$40,000, which fed my kids for the whole year. This Minor B project encouraged me and changed my life."

Tagg said for the last 15 years, he's watched Ali grow his business from his garage to be one of the greatest success stories he's ever seen.

In December 2024, TSI Engineering, Inc. was Caltrans' highest-paid Subcontinent Asian DBE firm. Ali's company now has 27 employees, has built projects throughout California and Oregon, and is currently working on a \$20 million Caltrans project to rehabilitate the Westley Safety Roadside Rest Area near Tracy.

His personal mission is to help others and educate younger generations. He often speaks at colleges and institutions, including the [National University of Sciences & Technology, Islamabad](#); [GIK Institute](#); the [University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore](#); and the [National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, Lahore](#).

He recently collaborated with [Columbia University's](#) School of Professional Studies to develop a 'Foundation of Construction Business; Formation & Operations' curriculum to guide a new course (based on his experience and success) in Columbia's Master of Construction Administration Program.

Ali also gives back to the small village he grew up in.

"I know what it's like to not have any help, so I give back," he said. "In my home village in Pakistan, my company installed four water filtration plants. I pay their electricity bill and hired a guy to handle operations. Everyone is in good health with clean water."

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 or [Small Business Certification](#).