



Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative

FAQ for Tribal Governments

California is strengthening broadband connections to improve access to education, health services and employment opportunities throughout the state. The [Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative\(MMBI\)](#) is the first step to creating a 10,000-mile open-access network that will bring high-speed broadband service to unserved and underserved communities.

1. What is the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative?

- The [Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative](#) is part of Governor Gavin Newsom’s larger vision to advance [Broadband for All](#) throughout California.
- Once constructed, the MMBN will facilitate connectivity to local broadband infrastructure developments in rural and underserved communities.
- Caltrans’ delivery of the MMBN will enable open-access for local broadband initiatives and developments, which will be coordinated and deployed by other entities (CPUC, CDT) as part of the [Last-Mile Connections](#) to bring broadband to as many Californians as possible (see item 5 below). The Last-Mile is the final leg of the network that allows local carriers to provide service to homes, businesses, and community institutions.

2. What is Caltrans’ role in the Middle-Mile Broadband Network?

- The California Department of Technology (CDT) released a [statewide map](#) that includes 10,000 miles of proposed network spanning the entire state. This full-system design map was delivered to Caltrans to conduct preconstruction work.
- Under the oversight and direction of the CDT, Caltrans has been tasked with completing the *environmental compliance, design, permitting, and construction* of the MMBN infrastructure.
- Each of the 12 [Caltrans Districts](#) will be responsible for delivering the MMBN projects in their respective regions, each with unique circumstances and challenges.

- ✓ ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE
- ✓ DESIGN
- ✓ PERMITTING
- ✓ CONSTRUCTION

3. What should tribes know about the accelerated project delivery strategy for the MMBN projects?

- Due to the timelines set by federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), funding the construction of MMBN needs to be completed by December 2026.
- Caltrans will conduct environmental and cultural resources analyses in accordance with all applicable federal and state environmental and historic preservation laws, including consultation with California Native American Tribes.
- Caltrans District cultural-environmental staff are conducting, and will continue to conduct, outreach and consultation with tribal governments regarding delivery of the



MMBN, on a project-by-project basis in each of the Districts.

- Caltrans' delivery of the MMBN has the potential to affect the environment, including natural and cultural resources of concern to tribal communities.
- To promote avoidance and/or minimize the impact to sensitive tribal cultural/environmental resources, the design of Caltrans' MMBN projects in the Districts will be guided by input from tribal cultural and environmental experts, as well as by the results of technical studies and assessments.
- Early identification of resources and enhanced coordination with project design engineers to strategize avoidance are key objectives for the accelerated delivery of the MMBN projects statewide.
- As the proposed middle-mile network traverses a patchwork of easement and land ownership circumstances, early coordination among relevant stakeholders and property owners (including, tribal, federal, state, and/or local entities) is imperative to the accelerated delivery of the MMBN infrastructure by Caltrans.

4. How can Tribes communicate their cultural and/or environmental concerns to Caltrans regarding the MMBN projects?

- [Caltrans Tribal Relations Staff](#) in the Districts and/or Headquarters can provide direction for tribal government inquiries. Tribal cultural and environmental experts and representatives should contact their [District Native American Coordinators](#), in particular, regarding environmental and/or cultural resources for the MMBN.
- [Caltrans Environmental GIS Viewer](#) is an online interactive map tool that enables users to readily compare a variety of environmental, political, and infrastructure layers for the entire state, including the State Highway System and the planned 10,000-mile Middle-Mile network. Using the viewer, tribal experts and/or others can quickly inspect the locations of the planned MMBN routes relative to their own unique areas of sensitivity, (e.g., archaeological sites, traditional plant gathering places, and/or cultural sites with vulnerabilities to erosion, etc.). The GIS viewer can serve as an important early coordination tool to help strategize avoidance and plan for potential tribal cultural monitoring needs.
- Caltrans [Standard Environmental Reference, Volume 3](#), describes procedures for how Caltrans conducts cultural resources studies, including consultation with Native American Tribes. This document serves as an excellent go-to resource for gaining more familiarity with the Caltrans' responsibilities and procedures.

5. How is Caltrans engaging with Tribes for the MMBN?

- Caltrans executive leaders and staff, along with the CDT and other agency partners, held three virtual Tribal Engagement Sessions in early 2023 to share information and discuss the MMBN with tribal leaders and their designated cultural-environmental experts. For those who may not have had an opportunity to attend the live sessions, the recordings and meeting materials are available on the [CDT's website](#) as follows:



MMBI Regional Tribal Engagement Series – Recordings and Meeting Materials:

Session 1: January 11, 2023

[Presentation 1-11-2023 \(PDF\)](#), [Recording 1-11-2023](#), [Transcript 1-11-2023 \(PDF\)](#)

Session 2: January 17, 2023

[Presentation 1-17-2023 \(PDF\)](#), [Recording 1-17-2023](#), [Transcript 1-17-2023 \(PDF\)](#)

Session 3: February 2, 2023

[Presentation 2-2-2023 \(PDF\)](#), [Recording 2-2-2023](#), [Transcript 2-2-2023 \(PDF\)](#)

- Caltrans District cultural-environmental staff are conducting ongoing outreach and consultation with culturally-affiliated tribal governments on a project-by-project basis to identify and address potential cultural sensitivities or concerns related to the MMBN projects.
- Caltrans welcomes requests from tribal governments to consult and/or coordinate about broadband needs and/or circumstances for their tribal communities. To schedule a coordination meeting about broadband, tribal representatives are encouraged to contact their [District Native American Coordinator](#), or contact the [Native American Cultural Studies Branch](#) for guidance.

6. How can tribal governments learn more about the Last-Mile Broadband Connections to secure broadband connectivity for their communities?

- The purpose of the [Last-Mile Connections](#) is to support local broadband developments and facilitate connections to the MMBN within Caltrans right-of-way.
- For questions regarding Last Mile connectivity and funding opportunities for tribal communities, tribal governments are advised to coordinate directly with the CDT and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) using the contact information below:
 - o **Scott Adams, Deputy Director Broadband and Digital Literacy, CDT**
scott.adams@state.ca.gov
 - o **Kenneth Holbrook, Tribal Advisor, CPUC**
TribalAdvisor@cpuc.ca.gov
- statewidebroadband@cpuc.ca.gov
 - o Matt Rantanen, Senior Advisor to CDT for Tribal Broadband, Golden State Network
- matt.rantanen@goldenstatenet.org (third-party administrator)
 - o **Key links regarding Last-Mile Broadband Connections:**
<https://broadbandforall.cdt.ca.gov/last-mile-broadband/>
<https://broadbandforall.cdt.ca.gov/funding/>