



Civil Rights Division



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month by recognizing some of our employees.



CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Employee Spotlight: Bhargav Patel

Transportation Project Specialist Senior
Region 1, Bridge Department

He enjoys traveling, cooking, hiking, and spending time with family and friends.

“We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Joined TDOT Family July 2009

What does Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month mean to you and why?

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is a good opportunity to share the history, culture, and experiences from my motherland. It also highlights what has been and/or can be accomplished by the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

What had the biggest influence on your career?

My parents had a big influence on my career. When we first moved to the USA in 1994, they started their lives all over again with very little to their name and had to learn a whole new language. In the span of 10 years, they purchased, managed, and remodeled several hotels. I was very involved in a lot of construction work during the remodeling phases because of my parents' language barriers. I have seen what my parents have accomplished with very little and I know I can accomplish a lot more with what I have been provided.

The TDOT EPIC initiative was launched recently. How do you see your role as empowering people and influencing the culture?

My team and I will continue to encourage each other and grow together.

How do you suggest we create a workforce that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Continue to give everyone the opportunity to highlight their backgrounds, cultures, and accomplishments. Diversity brings in new ideas, experiences, and perspectives that leads to creativity and better problem-solving.



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Employee Spotlight: Nikita Graves

Transportation Project Specialist, ROW Engineer,
Region 2, Project Development



She enjoys spending time with her husband, Dylan, son, Niam and her two dogs, Cosmo and Nova. She loves hiking, being outside, and going to outdoor concerts in the summer.

“Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and test of our civilization.” -Mahatma Gandhi

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Joined TDOT Family October 2016

What does Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month mean to you and why?

It is important to me being Asian American, to remember my history and to be proud of who I am. Also, it is a great time to remember and recognize the accomplishments, successes, and contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islander community members.

What had the biggest influence on your career?

My uncle had a big influence on my career. He is also a Civil Engineer and growing up he would tell me about his job. Even at a young age, I enjoyed listening to him and learning about his work. I knew I wanted to become a Civil Engineer as well.

The TDOT EPIC initiative was launched recently. How do you see your role as empowering people and influencing the culture?

EPIC will hopefully give people new opportunities that will help them grow within their career and create a positive work environment that everyone enjoys.

How do you suggest we create a workforce that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion?

It is the responsibility of every employee, including my own, to continue shaping the TDOT culture into one that is equal, inclusive, and accepting of all people's thoughts and opinions regardless of a person's race, background, or education levels.



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Robinur M. Chowdhury, E.I.

Operations District Specialist
Region 4, Memphis TN

He enjoys playing the guitar, outdoor games, and going for long drives.

“Diversity means courage and strength.”

- Robinur M. Chowdhury

Joined TDOT Family January 2019



What does Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month mean to you and why?

The Asian American and Pacific Islanders have made significant contributions to many aspects of American culture, history, and society including science and medicine, literature and art, sports and recreation, government and politics as well as activism and law. In 2021, Kamala Harris became the first Asian American Vice President of the United States. This celebration and/or recognition promotes diversity and equity.

What had the biggest influence on your career?

I got the passion for building something new from my father who was a teacher by profession. One of my uncles played a vital role to make me choose the Civil Engineering education. Nevertheless, I was always amazed to see how a road was built from nothing (soft ground) to pitch-black asphalt (very hard surface) ready for vehicles.

The TDOT EPIC initiative was launched recently. How do you see your role as empowering people and influencing the culture?

Inclusion within the TDOT workforce makes me feel valued and appreciated. I see myself as a pen that connects the dots towards the progress of the EPIC journey.

How do you suggest we create a workforce that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Thanks to TDOT, I have received my permanent residency in the USA while keeping myself busy working for the state of Tennessee. I believe there are many more qualified candidates with diverse backgrounds and ethnicity who deserve a chance to work for TDOT.