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Transportation is the Heart of AAPI Communities

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When it comes to big issues that are important to the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, transportation doesn't always spring to mind first. Other matters such as civil rights, immigration, education, health care and small businesses have historically been at the forefront of concern.

But if you think further, transportation plays a huge role in revitalizing, reshaping, and defining communities – especially when it comes to public transportation. Transportation is all about improving mobility, connecting people and places to each other, and making communities accessible. The way in which transportation systems are created, supported, and operated frequently helps businesses succeed and neighborhoods thrive.

And that's why transportation is critically important to the AAPI community.

As part of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, the Department of Transportation is launching several important strategies to ensure that the community's voice can be heard in a meaningful way when it comes to transportation policies, programs and decisions.

We'll do this through regular, sustained engagement with AAPI community activists and organizations. For example, the Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), David Strickland, convened a roundtable meeting with the Chinatown Community Development Center in San Francisco to discuss traffic and pedestrian safety issues. It was a great opportunity for AAPI residents to share their experiences in navigating the challenging pedestrian environment in Chinatown and also discuss possible solutions with Administrator Strickland.

Additionally, Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff recently met with Southeast Asian American small business owners in St. Paul, MN, to discuss the Central Corridor Light Rail Project. Over the years, local businesses have voiced concern over anticipated disruption to restaurants, shops, and other establishments during the construction phase. Administrator Rogoff made clear that DOT and FTA want to keep the dialogue going with the AAPI business community so that the transit project – Minnesota's largest public works project in the state's history – ultimately serves the community in a positive way and the inconvenience is minimized as much as possible. In the end, we're eager to see businesses thrive once the project is complete.

Both of these roundtables were productive and meaningful. And they represent the kind of community engagement we'll undertake – to create opportunities for AAPI input and involvement in DOT programs, projects and issues.

Transportation is about quality of life, economic and community vitality, access and connectivity, and safety. These are issues that speak directly to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. And DOT wants the AAPI community to be at the table when it comes to these important issues.

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