Good afternoon Caltrans partners and friends,

I hope this note finds everyone well.

Opportunities to make a difference often present themselves during the most uncertain times—much like the emotionally demanding weeks and months we find ourselves navigating in 2020.

We have arrived at such a flashpoint as the nation endures the harrowing challenges posed by the COVID-19 health crisis, its related economic downturn, and the inspiration for my note to you this afternoon—the strongest momentum for racial equity and social justice America has experienced in decades. In this spirit of forward progress, Caltrans today is releasing an Equity Statement for the first time in its existence. I consider it an honor to share it with you now. Click here to read statement: [Equity Statement](https://dot.ca.gov/about-caltrans/equity-statement)

The statement addresses our leadership position and unique responsibility in government to eliminate barriers by providing a more equitable transportation system for all Californians. It also acknowledges that communities of color, underserved neighborhoods and disabled populations have experienced fewer benefits and a greater share of the negative impacts associated with some of Caltrans’ past decisions. While a portion of these disparities are the result of a history of racism in transportation policy and design, there is no time like the present to shape an enlightened approach to our philosophies moving ahead.

Where Caltrans goes from here and the decisions it renders as a department with regard to this foundational issue will echo for generations to come. After all, transportation by its very nature connects human beings, bridges seemingly impassable divides and shrinks the distances and arbitrary boundaries between us. To that end, we are taking steps to implement concrete actions and establish clear metrics to achieve continued progress on this front. In fact, we have recently made visible commitments that signal our planned and purposeful approach to racial and social justice as a core departmental principle. Here are a few:

* Partnered with the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to review discriminatory names of landmarks and State-owned facilities.
* Changed the name of our Office of Business and Economic Opportunity to the Caltrans Office of Civil Rights and upgraded its leadership position to a Deputy Director.
* Developed a three-part *Conversations on Equity* video series establishing a dialogue about what equity means for Caltrans and those we serve.
* Upgraded the EEO program manager to Assistant Deputy Director.
* Established the new Caltrans Office of Race and Equity (CORE) in the Division of Planning and Modal Programs (also elevated Native American Liaison Branch Office).
* Created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.
* Circulated an informative video to help educate all employees about unconscious bias.
* Adopted the Caltrans Race & Equity Action Plan.

Thank you for sharing part of your day with me. On behalf of Caltrans personnel across the entire state, we value your continued partnership and look forward to working together soon.

-Toks Omishakin