



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation infrastructure is an essential building block for the economic development of tribal communities, and it includes many modes such as roads, bridges, ferries, trails, air and transit. These modes need to be safe, adequate, and well-maintained because they are the main source of transportation for tribal members and members of surrounding communities. In addition, key tribal functions rely on these roads including economic development, emergency response, transit for elders, and school access for Native youth.

According to the latest National Tribal Transportation Facility Inventory (NTTFI), there are approximately 160,000 miles of roads and trails in Indian Country owned and maintained by tribes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), states and counties. Of those, Indian tribes own and maintain 13,650 miles of roads and trails, of which only 1,000 (or 7.3 percent) are paved—12,650 miles are gravel, earth, or primitive. Of the 29,400 miles owned and maintained by the BIA, 75 percent of them are graveled, earth, or primitive. Combined, these 42,000 miles of roads are still among the most underdeveloped, unsafe, and poorly maintained road networks in the nation, even though they are the primary means of access to American Indian and Alaska Native communities by Native and non-Native residents and visitors alike.¹²¹

The current transportation authorization, Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or "FAST Act", was signed into law on December 4, 2015. The FAST Act authorized transportation programs for Indian tribal governments by authorizing the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) jointly administered by the BIA and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); the Tribal Transit Program administered by the Federal Transit Administration; Department of Transportation (DOT) competitive and discretionary grants to address highway safety available to public authorities including tribes; and established tribal self-governance with the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Although the majority of tribal transportation programs are authorized and funded through the Department of Transportation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Road Maintenance program within the Department of Interior is critical to BIA owned roads and facilities. The BIA is responsible for maintaining approximately 29,400 miles of roads in Indian Country including 900 bridges. However, funding for the BIA Road Maintenance has remained stagnant at approximately \$24 million for several appropriations cycles, while deferred maintenance has risen to over \$289 million for FY 2015. The condition of these roads is increasingly concerning for tribal members and members of surrounding communities. The lack of sufficient infrastructure also hampers economic development opportunities for tribes. The integrity of the transportation infrastructure systems in Indian Country includes not only TTP and Tribal Transit Programs but it also includes BIA owned roads and facilities which has a direct impact to tribal and surrounding non-tribal communities who commute daily.

Key Recommendations

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation, HUD Appropriations Bill Tribal Transportation Program (TTP)

- Provide \$485 million for the Tribal Transportation Program.

The Tribal Transportation Program oversees over 160,000 of roads and trails in Indian Country, which are owned by the BIA, Indian tribes, states, and counties, and providing safe and adequate transportation systems. These roadways and trails serve as the primary transportation thoroughfare for residents of and visitors to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The Transportation Program is funded from the Highway Trust Fund and allocated through a statutory formula.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation, HUD Appropriations Bill Tribal Technical Assistance Programs (TTAPs)

- Provide \$1.5 million for Tribal Technical Assistance Programs.

The TTAPs is the only program providing technical assistance and training for Indian tribal governments to build tribal capacity by providing training and certifying highway roads and technical experts who oversee and construct highways and roads in tribal communities. There are currently seven TTAPs around the country serving all the 567 federal recognized tribes, and each TTAP receives \$140,000 annually (for a total of \$980,000). NCAI request an increase to \$1.5 million to fund TTAP to improve tribal technical capacity for tribal transportation officials.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill Tribal Transit Program

- Provide \$30 million for the Tribal Transit Program.

The Public Transportation on Indian Reservations (5311(c)) (also known as Tribal Transit Program), is a program that enables Indian tribes to use the funding for capital, operating, planning, and administrative expenses for public transit projects to meet the needs of public transportation in rural tribal communities. This program continues to be a successful program for tribal governments.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill Tribal High Priority Projects Program

- Fund the Tribal High Priority Projects Program for \$30 million.

In the recent enacted transportation authorization, the FAST Act, the Tribal High Priority Projects Program (THPP) was not authorized; however, this very critical program needs to be funded for the safety and welfare of tribal and surrounding non-tribal communities. This program is crucial to tribal governments to complete their highest priority projects, which often include efforts to repair and reconstruct facilities following an emergency or natural disaster.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

BIA Roads Maintenance

- *Provide \$40 million for the BIA Road Maintenance Program.*

Currently, BIA needs approximately \$290 million per year to maintain BIA-owned roads and bridges to an adequate standard. Costs to maintain these roads have risen sharply due to high inflation for construction. However, for FY 2016, only \$26.6 million has been appropriated for BIA roads maintenance, and has remained steadily near this amount for prior fiscal years, while need continues increase. It is critical that \$40 million be appropriated for the BIA Road Maintenance program in FY 2018 to begin to address the growing roads and maintenance needs.