



# TRANSPORTATION

The economy in Indian Country is intertwined with transportation infrastructure -- without safe and well maintained roads, bridges, and adequate public transportation, tribal governments would be unable to provide essential services to its citizens. Tribes have to provide construct, improve and maintain their transportation facilities that are used by tribal members and nontribal members.

The most recent National Tribal Transportation Facility Inventory (NTTFI) reports there are approximately 161,000 miles of roads and trails in Indian Country eligible for federal funding. Of those, Indian tribes own and maintain 13,650 miles of roads and trails, of which only 1,000 (or 7.3%) are paved, and 12,650 miles are gravel, earth, or primitive. Of the 29,400 miles owned and maintained by the BIA, 75% are gravel, earth, or primitive. All combined, the 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.

Another federal transportation program that is vital to infrastructure in Indian Country is the BIA Road Maintenance Program, which is funded and authorized under the Department of Interior and is separate from the Department of Transportation appropriation. The BIA Road Maintenance Program is critical to BIA owned roads and facilities. Currently, BIA is responsible for maintaining approximately 29,400 miles of roads in Indian Country including 900 bridges. However, funding for the BIA Road Maintenance received funding of about \$30 million in FY 2017, while deferred maintenance has risen to over \$290 million for FY 2017. 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.

According to a recent GAO Report published in May 2017, *Better Data Could Improve Road Management and Inform Indian Student Attendance Strategies*<sup>77</sup>, the report found that BIA did not provide adequate documents on road maintenance such as cost estimate and no process for tribes to properly report on road maintenance. Accurate data on road maintenance is needed to adequately address the deferred maintenance.

It is imperative federal funding levels for Tribal Transportation Program (TTP), Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP), Tribal Transit Program, and Bureau of Indian Affairs Road Maintenance Program are increased. For many tribal governments, this federal funding is the only source to improve or maintain their road systems.

## Key Recommendations

### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation, HUD Appropriations Bill

Tribal Transportation Program (TTP)

- Provide \$495 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 \$5 million for Tribal Technical Assistance Programs.

The Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) 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. In fall 2016, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced the restructuring of the TTAP, and eliminated the seven TTAPs around the country who served all the 567 federal recognized tribes. In December 2017, the FHWA announced a two year pilot program and centralized the TTAP to the University of Virginia, Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) in Virginia. The entire restructuring has proceeded without proper tribal consultation, NCAI is concern about the restructuring of the TTAP with no tribal input. NCAI request an increase to \$5 million to fund TTAP to improve tribal technical capacity for tribal transportation officials and to ensure proper tribal consultation is carried out by FHWA regarding the restructuring of the TTAP.

### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill

Tribal Transit Program

- Provide \$35 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 Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, P.L. 114-94, the Tribal High Priority Projects Program (THPP) was not authorized this very critical program is needed 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 \$ 35 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. For FY 2017, \$30 million was appropriated for BIA roads maintenance, and has remained steadily at round this amount for prior fiscal years, while need continues increase. It is critical for increase appropriate funding levels of \$35 million for the BIA Road Maintenance program in FY 2019 to begin to address the growing roads and maintenance needs.