



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SAC-12-040

TITLE: Support for Increase in Funding for Road Maintenance throughout Indian Country

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, transportation systems within Tribal Nations are a vital concern and contribute greatly to the health, safety, effective governance and economic development of the Tribal Nations by providing a means for Tribal citizens to travel to obtain vital services, and to get to schools, employment and government offices; and such transportation systems must be adequately maintained to be of use to all who travel reservation roads; and

WHEREAS, many Tribal Nations have hundreds of miles of roads that are either Tribal or Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) roads which tens of thousands of Tribal citizens use every day to get to work, school, health clinics, government offices, retail centers and other places; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, both under the immediate past federal highway legislation that allocates funding for maintenance and construction of state and federal highways, and funds that are available through the U.S. Department of Interior for construction and maintenance of the Tribal Transportation Program (formerly the Indian Reservation Roads); the funding for maintenance of such roads has been woefully inadequate, amounting, for example, on one Tribal Nation, to a few hundred thousand dollars per year for maintenance of hundreds of miles of reservation roads that allows for only a few miles of roads to be repaired each year, while the remaining roadways continue to deteriorate under harsh weather conditions and traffic; and

WHEREAS, limitations on road maintenance funds create a dramatic safety hazard for school buses and parents transporting Tribal children to schools within the reservations, as well as all others using such roads, especially in the weather extremes that many Tribal Nations experience; are disincentives to economic development; and contribute to conditions that allow continued poverty to exist within those Tribal Nations which experience deteriorating BIA and Tribal roadways within their boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the recently enacted federal transportation funding bill (passed in late July, 2012) only extends federal transportation funding for two years; and while it establishes a different formula for roads funding than in the past, it also does not change significantly the amount of funding that will be available to Tribes for road maintenance; and

WHEREAS, other road maintenance funds available through the Department of Interior also continue to be inadequate.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI urges Congress to provide increased funding to support the maintenance needs of Tribal and BIA roads, allowing Tribes to at least provide protection for roads that presently are a danger to those who must travel over them; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI urges Congress to allocate sufficient resources to road maintenance on Indian lands in general, including the program for Indian lands road maintenance within the Department of Interior, allowing BIA and Tribal roads to meet the needs of all who use them; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2012 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Sacramento Convention Center from October 21-26, 2012 in Sacramento, California, with a quorum present.



President

ATTEST:



Recording Secretary