



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #MKE-17-033

TITLE: Support for the Tribal Transportation Unity Caucus's (TTUC) Proposed Highway and Tribal Road Safety Bill

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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, on December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or FAST Act, (Pub. L. No. 114-94), a five-year surface transportation measure (through 2020), which authorizes rising spending levels for highway construction, safety improvements, and transit that have benefitted Indian Country; and

WHEREAS, the tribes of Northwest Indians adopted Resolution #16-55, Support for Secure Funding of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), the source of funding for most federal surface transportation programs, to ensure that the HTF has the funds necessary to deliver the promises made to Indian Country within the FAST Act; and

WHEREAS, transportation infrastructure on Indian reservations and in Alaska Native Villages is inadequate and unsafe; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center for Disease Control, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death of Indian children, American Indian and Alaskan Native infants are eight times more likely to die in a vehicle-related crash than non-Native infants, and motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury for American Indian and Alaskan Native adults; and

WHEREAS, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has reported that 3 out of 4 deaths in motor vehicle crashes on reservations, the individuals were not wearing seat belts; and

WHEREAS, the Congress has long recognized that roads promote economic development and help Indian tribes provide vital governmental services, which are essential for healthy and vibrant tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, current federal appropriations for the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP), Tribal Transit Program, BIA Indian Highway Safety Program, TTP Safety Grant program, and BIA Road Maintenance Program are wholly inadequate to address the unmet tribal transportation infrastructure and highway safety needs; and

WHEREAS, these unmet needs perpetuate transportation barriers for American Indians and Alaska Natives, undermine the efforts by Tribal governments to address continuing disparities between the general population and Native communities as concerns access to higher education, health services, economic opportunity and public safety, and limit the ability of Tribal governments, as “public authorities,” to meaningfully collaborate with federal, State and other local governments regarding transportation infrastructure and safety projects of mutual concern and interest; and

WHEREAS, the FAST Act’s discretionary and competitive grant programs, such as the TIGER grant program and Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program (INFRA), which do not have Tribal set-asides to ensure that Indian tribes and Alaskan Native Villages can favorably compete, and which contain matching and other application requirements, such as cost-benefit analysis studies, severely limit the benefits of such federal programs to Indian Country by making it difficult to compete; and

WHEREAS, Indian tribes and Alaskan Native Villages, in anticipation of the Administration and Congress introducing a \$1 trillion, 10-year infrastructure plan for the Nation, including transportation infrastructure, have prepared a Tribal Transportation Unity Caucus (TTUC) discussion draft bill that expands highway safety programs specifically for Indian tribes and Alaskan Natives Villages, streamlines the delivery of highway, transit and safety funds from the Federal Government to Indian tribes and Alaskan Native Villages by reducing burdensome regulations, improves the recording of rights-of-way over Indian lands to expedite transportation projects, provides innovative financing tools to help tribes finance much needed road construction and roadway safety improvement projects, and requests increased Federal funds for existing tribal highway construction, bridge, transit, and safety programs; and

WHEREAS, if Tribal governments are to obtain parity with States and local governments, as public authorities, with the authority and responsibility to finance, build, operate, and safely maintain transportation systems, tribes must advocate before Congress and the Administration for direct federal investments in the programs and funds required to meet the needs of their tribal citizens consistent with the federal government’s trust responsibilities.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) does hereby declare its support for the Tribal Transportation Unity Caucus’s (TTUC) discussion draft bill and urges tribes to advocate to Congress and the Administration for its inclusion in a national infrastructure measure to remedy the ongoing unmet transportation, transit and highway safety needs of Indian Country; and

BE IT FURTHER 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 2017 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee, WI, Oct 15, 2017 - Oct 20, 2017, with a quorum present.



Jefferson Keel, President

ATTEST:



Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary