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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6450

ALLISON BINNEY, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID A. MULLON JR., MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

April 22, 2009

Dear Tribal Leader:

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) authorization of federal highway and transit programs expires on September 30, 2009. There are tribal provisions in SAFETEA-LU, including the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) Program, the Indian Reservation Roads Bridge Program (IRRBP), and the Tribal Transit Grant Program (TTGP).

I have released a discussion draft of tribal transportation legislation titled the Transportation Reauthorization of Indian Programs (TRIP Act). The draft has been released in an effort to obtain comments on tribal transportation issues early in the reauthorization process to ensure that tribal transportation projects are fully considered and funded as part of Congress' overall transportation efforts.

The major provisions of the discussion draft address issues raised in the Committee's July 2007 Hearing on Transportation Issues in Indian Country, as well as the recommendations of the National Congress of American Indian – Inter-Tribal Transportation Association Joint Task Force on Transportation, which worked with tribal leaders over a two-year period on tribal transportation issues in the reauthorization.

In particular, the draft bill includes 1) increased levels of authorized funding for the Indian Reservation Roads, Indian Reservation Roads Bridge Program and the Tribal Transit Grant Programs; 2) new programs designed to address safety problems for users of the tribal transportation system; and 3) ways to streamline funding to ensure that tribes can operate their transportation programs effectively.

The Committee is interested in obtaining comments on this discussion draft from all affected stakeholders in this matter, including but not limited to tribal governments and agencies, those who use and travel on tribal transportation systems, and local and state governments. We intend to work with all affected stakeholders throughout the legislative process.

Please review the discussion draft located on the Committee website at www.indian.senate.gov. The discussion draft is located in the "Issues" section under "Indian Reservation Roads." Comments should include the subject line "TRIP Act Discussion Draft" and should be sent either via facsimile to (202) 228-2589 or via e-mail to denise_desiderio@indian.senate.gov.

Please send comments on the draft by close of business on Friday, May 15, 2009. Thank you for your time and interest in this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron L. Dorgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "B".

Byron L. Dorgan
Chairman