



Intertribal Transportation Association (ITA) *Mary Beth Clark-President*

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Personal Profile

My name is Mary Beth Clark, I am an enrolled Nez Perce on my father's side and Klamath on my mother's side. I have a BA and Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Eastern Washington University. I have worked in Indian Affairs for over 26 years which includes roles of tribal economic development, tribal planning director, and tribal transportation/community development manager. I served a two-year contract position as the Senior Tribal Policy Advisor for EPA Region 10. I have served as Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indian (ATNI) Co-Chair of the Transportation Committee. I currently serve as the Northwest representative on Tribal Transportation Program Coordinating Committee (a joint Tribal-Federal regulatory body making recommendations to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) concerning the Tribal Transportation Program), and was the Northwest representative on the Department of Transportation's Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Program Negotiated Rulemaking Committee. I am currently serving as the President for ITA. I have been active in Tribal transportation issues for decades.



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ITA Overview

Intertribal Transportation Association (ITA) is a non-profit Tribal advocacy association that first met in Polson, Montana in 1993. ITA represents the transportation interest of the Tribal nations, and was created to foster the development, operation, and maintenance of transportation systems that serve the American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. ITA exists to assist every Tribe to develop their transportation systems, keep tribes informed on legislative/Federal actions, assist in coordinating training, and facilitate the government-to-government relationship between the United States government and the Indian Nations so that Tribal voices and Tribal viewpoints are shared and heard by Federal agency officials.

Challenge Tribes and the United States Face Together

Roads and bridges in Indian country today are known for their poor maintenance (paved, gravel, or dirt), great distances to trauma centers, few first responders, lack of highway safety features, and sun-bleached and wind-worn signage. But too often, Federal appropriations are insufficient to the needs of Tribes. The resulting harm to American Indian and Alaska Natives from too few Federal appropriations, and the consequential poor conditions of Indian country roads, bridges, ferries, and transit systems, is tragic. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

- Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of unintentional injury death for American Indian/Alaska Natives (AIANs). Among adult AIANs, motor vehicle-related death rates are more than twice that of non-Hispanic Caucasians or African Americans;
- Among AIANs aged 1 to 19, motor vehicles crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury death;
- Among AIAN infants less than one year of age, motor vehicle traffic death rates are eight times higher than that of non-Hispanic Caucasians.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) captures the important aspects of successful traffic safety in the expression “the Four Es” which stand for: Engineering; Enforcement and regulation; Education and information; and Emergency response.

There is another principle known as the “Golden Hour.” Simply stated, if a victim of a motor vehicle crash can reach a trauma center within 60 minutes and receive medical care, there is a higher likelihood that they will survive and not die from their injuries, and that their recovery will be faster and less costly. Unfortunately, there is seldom a “Golden Hour” in Indian country when motorists or pedestrians are involved in a serious motor vehicle crash. Few first responders, too great a distance to a well-equipped medical trauma center. As a Nation, we must do better by Indian Tribes and think comprehensively about how to target these conditions to make Tribal roads safer.

These statistics and current conditions cry out for more Federal Resources. The Department can greatly assist Tribes by getting more uniform motor vehicle and pedestrian crash data from State and County police, BIA and Tribal law enforcement, and other first responders to motor vehicle accidents in Indian Country. We seek your leadership to improve the Transportation needs in Indian Country.

Key Tribal Transportation Recommendations to Improve USDOT-Tribes Relations

- **Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) increase to \$800 million**
 - Increasing TTP program authorization to \$800 million because of the disparity between road and bridge inventory that is known for their poor maintenance (paved, gravel, or dirt), great distances to trauma centers, few first responders, lack of highway safety features, and sun-bleached and wind-worn signage. But too often, Federal appropriations are insufficient to the needs of Tribes.
- **Tribal Transit increase to \$68 million by FY2025 (formula \$58 and \$10 discretionary)**
 - Tribal Transit Program is woefully underfunded; Tribal Transit can provide that needed link to Tribal members and community transportation to get to work, healthcare, education, other governmental services, and commercial businesses in remote rural communities.
- **Increase in BIA Road Maintenance funds (Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriation).**
 - Tribes can use 25% of their TTP funds, or \$500,000, whichever is greater, to carry out road

maintenance on public roads in the Tribe's TTP road inventory. Tribes make this choice to maintain such routes due to shortfalls in the BIA Road Maintenance Program (Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriation).

- **Establishing the Tribal Government Affairs Office at USDOT**
 - Establishing an Office of Tribal Government Affairs elevates Tribal transportation infrastructure, transit, and highway safety needs at USDOT, not just for DOT personnel like Arlando Teller and Milo Booth who work with Tribes, but for every USDOT official – how do agency policies and programs advance safety and mobility in Indian country
- **Establish Advisory Committee to help implement the Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Program (TTSGP)**
 - The TTSGP became active on October 1, 2020. During Negotiated Rulemaking, Tribes requested that an Tribal-Federal Self-Governance Advisory Committee to be created to help implement the TTSGP at the Department and the necessary element of Technical Assistance to Tribes. Tribes also requests adequate appropriations to TTSGP so these key elements can be implemented.
- **Elevating the Deputy Assistant Secretary to an Assistant Secretary position**
 - Elevate the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tribal Government Affairs at the Department of Transportation to an Assistant Secretary level and fund the position to ensure that Tribal Transportation needs are well understood at the Department, and that the Department's many resources are marshalled effectively and efficiently to best serve Indian Communities.
- **Invest in Tribes as you invest in the States; Tribal governments are “public authorities” (as State/Counties/Municipalities) that are responsible for the construction and maintenance of transportation systems to serve Tribal citizens and all residents.**
 - Tribes are partners of the Federal government, States, counties, boroughs and townships and have the capacity and capability to put Federal appropriations to good use for safe circulation for their communities. Invest in Tribes as you invest in the States.

ITA Closing Remarks

I, as the President of ITA, appreciates the opportunity to share the Tribal voices of ITA regarding Tribal Transportation. ITA passed Resolution 2020-04 this past December that supports the Tribal provisions in the H.R.2, including the plus ups to the Tribal Transportation Program, Tribal Transit Program, High Priority Projects Program, restoring the exemption from the obligation limitation deduction for the Tribal Transportation Program, other increases to key Federal transportation and transit programs for Tribes, and streamlining provision included in S2302, to improve the economies of the Tribal Nations and to make Tribal communities safer for all our citizens.

In conclusion, Tribes are willing and capable partners with the Federal government, States and local governments and are determined to break down the decades of transportation barriers that have held us back from taking the fullest advantage of our peoples, resources, and opportunities to improve our communities. Give Tribes and Tribal Organizations the tools for success and we will achieve great things together.

Please accept my personal invite to the Annual ITA Conference that is usually held in December. Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of ITA.

