July 6, 2021

Honorable Arlando S. Teller
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Tribal Affairs
Office of the Secretary
Department of Transportation
Washington DC, 20590

Dear Deputy Secretary Teller (Arlando),

As you are aware, the Intertribal Transportation Association (ITA) is a national Tribal organization whose focus is on improving both Tribal Transportation/Infrastructure and Tribal Transit in our membership’s respective communities. To that purpose, ITA recently submitted letters to both the Transportation Reauthorization that included 16 specific needs for Tribes, and American Jobs Plan (AJP) that included 15 specific needs for Tribes.

Since 1993’s formal establishment of ITA, there have been improvements and a few setbacks for Tribes in Transportation/Infrastructure and Tribal Transit – we believe both letters on Transportation Reauthorization and the AJP reflect both improvements and setbacks.

However, ITA has noticed a strong positive opportunity to improve Tribal Transportation/Infrastructure and Tribal Transit in both the Transportation Reauthorization and the AJP. The AJP shows promise of improvements to Tribes in Transportation/Infrastructure and Tribal Transit that ITA has not witnessed since our inception.

Items recognized in the AJP regarding Tribal Transportation/Infrastructure includes.

- Double the Tribal Transportation Programs Budget to provide safe and adequate transportation and public road access to and within tribal areas.
- Rebuilding crumbling infrastructure like roads and water systems,
- Proposes $5 billion for a new Rural Partnership Program to help rural regions, including Tribal Nations, build on their unique assets and realize their vision for inclusive community and economic development.
- Provide dedicated funding for Tribal lands. Includes dedicated funding for largely rural tribal areas across many programs. The President’s plan funds critical water infrastructure needs in Indian Country, as well as tribal water settlements. This plan will ensure
- significant funds are set aside for broadband infrastructure on tribal lands and that tribal nations are consulted in program administration.
- Proposes $5 billion for a new Rural Partnership Program to help rural regions, including Tribal Nations, build on their unique assets and realize their vision for inclusive community and economic development.

In addition, ITA has responded to a courtesy notice from the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) that the House in Congress would like to hear from Tribes what they would like to request for the AJP. On April 9, 2021, ITA submitted a written response, letter attached, regarding 15 items for Tribal Transportation/Infrastructure and Tribal Transit for the AJP.

Please make sure to make every effort to include ITA’s “ask” from our April 9, 2021, letter. One additional item, for establishing the Office of Self-Governance and establishing a US DOT Self-Governance Advisory Committee, we request elevating the US DOT Deputy Secretary of Tribal Affairs to US DOT Assistant Secretary.

ITA is pleased to see the Administration and Congress have reached out to Tribes, including the areas ITA is focused on, Tribal Transportation/Infrastructure and Tribal Transit and supports both President Biden’s and Congress’ effort to address critical needs for Tribes in the American Jobs Plan.

Respectfully,

MaryBeth Frank-Clark, ITA President