

TRIBAL AND STATE RELATIONS COMMITTEE

July 27, 2010

Cankdeska Cikana Community College
Fort Totten, N.D.North Dakota Department of Transportation
Ron Henke, Project Development Office Director

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'm Ron Henke, Project Development Office Director at the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT). Today we will discuss ND Highway 23 and other transportation issues in Indian country.

The Department has always had good relationships with the tribes in North Dakota and wants to continue to work in partnership with them to improve the state roads on the reservations.

The Department and state government have invested millions of dollars in federal funds and state matching funds for various road projects within the Indian Reservations through the years.

Congress has extended the federal Transportation Bill (SAFETEA-LU) through December 31, 2010. As we look to the future, federal funding is uncertain; construction on any project we discuss depends on funding.

Today, I will report on transportation projects planned to be completed over the next three years for ND 23 and other state highways in the reservations throughout North Dakota.

Fort Berthold Reservation

The Department has been aggressive in the Energy Area of the western part of the state, with recent pavement preservation projects and many transportation investments planned to be completed, including projects in the Fort Berthold Reservation area on ND 23 and other highways on the local system.

Highways in the New Town area, ND 23, 22 and 8 are in one of the fastest traffic growth areas in the western part of the state. Due to the energy boom, recent traffic numbers show a truck traffic growth ranging from 100 to 600 percent on these highways.

Current construction projects in this area include:

ND 23

- Adding turn lanes at a number of intersections east of New Town this year. (2010)
- Overlay and rumble stripes east of New Town. (2010)
- Regrading and new asphalt surfacing—west of Four Bears Bridge. (2011)
- Reconstruction in the city of New Town. (2012)

ND 22

- Overlay project this year. (2010)

While we have made significant transportation improvements in the New Town area, including Four Bears Bridge, we recognize that there has been an increase in traffic. DOT Director Ziegler has asked staff to immediately start scoping ND 23 and ND 8 corridors to address this traffic growth.

Spirit Lake Reservation

The DOT has been working on several challenges with the rising lake levels affecting roads in the Devils Lake area. Since 1993, the lake elevation has risen almost 29 feet. The current lake elevation is 1,452 feet. Over \$191.1 million (\$161.4 million federal funding \$28.7 million state/local funding) has been let to contract through the DOT from 1994 through November of 2009 to raise roadways that have been impacted by high water levels. This includes \$149.4 million for state highways, \$25.9 million for county roads and \$14.4 million for BIA roads.

Currently 18 projects are planned from 2010 – 2012 on state highways in the Devils Lake Basin. The total cost of these projects is estimated to be about \$168.4 million, \$143.8 million federal and \$24.6 million state funding. Upon completion of these projects the roadways will be raised to an elevation of 1460 feet.

Current projects within the Spirit Lake Reservation boundaries include:

- Grade raises on ND Highway 57 and ND Highway 20. (2010)

Turtle Mountain Reservation

Over the years, the DOT has made significant investments in US Highway 281 in the Turtle Mountain Reservation area.

Current projects include:

- Adding turn lanes at various intersections on US 281 in the Belcourt area. (2011)

Standing Rock Reservation

The Department has been working closely with the Standing Rock Reservation on adding improvements to ND Highway 24 in the Fort Yates area.

Current projects include:

- Adding turn lanes at various intersections on ND 24 through Fort Yates near schools and college. (2012)
- Preventive maintenance overlay on ND 31. (2010)

Safety Projects

We are always concerned about the safety of the traveling public. We are continuously monitoring crash and fatality rates in the area and evaluating the data to implement safety projects.

Recent Safety Projects include:

- Lowered speed limits on Highway 23.
- Installation of centerline and edgeline rumble stripes in the Williston District in 2010 and on all two-lane state highways as funding becomes available. Research has found edgeline and centerline rumble stripes to be effective in reducing head-on crashes, opposite direction sideswipe crashes, and rollovers.

Conclusion

The Department hopes this addresses the topics requested. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today.