TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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Introduction:

Existing Statute requires that FHWA develop and fund Bridge, Congestion, Pavement and Safety Management Systems (SMS) for all 23 USC 204 programs. To meet this requirement, in 2005 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), with Tribal input developed a *Strategic Highway Safety Plan for Indian Lands*. The document states that traffic deaths and injuries severely impact the quality of life in Indian Country and the need to address this trend. Unlike the rest of the United States, where the fatal motor vehicle crash rate is decreasing, the rate at which Native Americans are killed in car crashes has been on the rise. The strategic plan identified eight specific emphasis areas to reduce the number of fatal and injury crashes in Indian Country: 1) decision making processes; 2) data collection; 3) run off the road crashes; 4) occupant protection/child restraint; 5) alcohol/drug impaired driving; 6) other driver behavior and awareness; 7) drivers under the age of 35; and 8) pedestrian safety.

The strategic plan also recommended establishment of a Steering Committee to "…be responsible for: ensuring that the intent of this strategic plan is preserved, monitoring of transportation safety statistics in Indian Lands, sharing successes and best practices and for the development of an action specific *Safety Management System Implementation Plan*. The work of the steering committee will be guided and monitored by the senior leadership of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Highway Administration in consultation with Indian Tribal Governments." The intent of this plan is to build on earlier efforts toward improving safety and to meet the commitment of identifying specific tasks that if accomplished, will begin to address some or all of the emphasis areas identified in the *Strategic Highway Safety Plan for Indian Lands*. This plan will be implemented on the short-term basis, preferably three to five years. When it is fully implemented, it will be evaluated and updated as safety needs change.

Unlike other federally funded or administered programs, the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) program is somewhat unique. An IRR is defined as any public road that is within the exterior boundaries of an Indian Reservation, or roads that provide access to Indian Lands. This alone creates a program that not only involves the Federal and Tribal Governments, but also requires coordination and cooperation with State, City and County governments for implementation of projects. The program also relies on the sovereign Tribal Governments for actual implementation of a transportation improvement program (TIP). Due to some of these complexities, this plan is intended to provide direction to Federal agencies on programs that should be implemented, with a focus on roadways

under Federal jurisdiction. However, some activities will require coordination and a cooperative effort with Tribal governments.

Similar to other safety management plans that are being developed, the attached Federal Lands Highway (FLH) Safety Philosophy will be a guide to enhancing safety on all Federal Lands projects. The philosophy identifies FLH vision as "Creating the best transportation system in balance with the values of Federal and Tribal Lands." It also includes the following six major efforts:

1. Collection and reporting of accurate and timely crash data;
2. Implementation of Safety Management Systems and principles;
3. Early consideration of safety in all highway programs and projects;
4. The identification and investigation of impacted hazardous locations and features, and establishing countermeasures and priorities to address the identification or potential hazards;
5. Incorporation of appropriate safety improvements in all FLH projects; and
6. Systematic upgrading of roadside features and elements to be designed to meet current nationally accepted standards for crashworthiness.

Implementation Activities:

I. Development of Tribal Specific Safety Plans

As noted earlier, the Federal Government, is one of many players with responsibility for safety programs within Indian Country. In order to make a real impact on overall safety, coordination with Tribal governments is essential. Reducing the fatality rate in Indian Country can be achieved most efficiently if all parties work toward good planning and effective coordination of available resources. This means developing a safety plan before implementing safety solutions.

FHWA (both the Federal Lands Office and Federal Aid Offices) and BIA will work with Tribes that are interested in developing a safety plan that is specific to the needs of their Reservation or community. The plan will identify and prioritize safety needs, and should include a safety policy statement and cover the areas of engineering, education, enforcement and emergency medical services, while using the emphasis areas identified in the *Strategic Highway Safety Plan for Indian Lands* as a guide. To assist in this effort, attached are three sample Tribal safety plans that were developed with the Nisqually, Makah and Jamestown S'Klallam Tribes. To further this task, FHWA and BIA will:

1. Provide information to Tribal leaders and transportation planners on the importance of implementing countermeasures to safety problems. A safety package will be developed that includes information on items such as: Safety Conscious Planning; Road Safety Audits; Traffic Records Assessments; Safe Routes to School; Hazard Elimination Programs; Seat Belt Initiatives; and others as appropriate.

2. Assist the Tribes in the development and updating of Tribal safety plans. The goal would be to initiate 10-12 annually, each of which should include a site visit.

II. Safety Data Collection and Analysis

One of the most pressing needs in identification of safety problems and obtaining funding for safety programs is a better understanding of the crash history of roadways within Indian Country. In many areas of the United States, Tribal or BIA collected crash reports are not shared outside the enforcement community. This results in a "black hole" of sorts on Indian Lands, where crash histories show little or no crashes having occurred because transportation professionals do not have access to crash data. To help resolve this issue, FHWA and BIA will undertake the following action items:

1. FHWA will develop a contact list within State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and/or Patrol Agencies which Tribes can contact to obtain available crash history information. In addition, FHWA will develop a compilation of current data management practices in these State DOTs and/or Patrol Agencies.

2. FHWA will facilitate the development of a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for data sharing among BIA, IHS, States, FHWA, and Tribes and assist in developing this in a MOU.

3. BIA and FHWA will address the needs of Tribal safety data. A number of options can be explored to address both institutional and technological challenges related to data collection, ranging from awareness and education to assisting Tribes in improving their crash reporting systems. Since the Indian Highway Safety Program Office within the BIA has piloted crash recording improvement projects with several Tribes, FHWA will coordinate with this Office. This pilot demonstrates the benefits of the systems as well as help Tribal and BIA police departments improve their crash reporting practices

III. Education and Training

Educating and training individuals in BIA and Tribal Governments in transportation safety is important to the success of improving safety on the IRR system.

1. FHWA will partner with BIA to develop technical safety resources and training for BIA Division of Transportation.

2. Work with Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) to ensure a safety training curriculum is being presented yearly.

IV. Development of Safety Programs and Funding Sources List

There continues to be a myriad of funding sources available for Tribes to apply for implementation of safety activities or improvements. Many of the Tribes are not clear as to what funding exists, what eligibility requirements there are and of timeframes for applying. To help expand the use of safety funds, FHWA and BIA will:

1. Develop a list of possible funding sources within FHWA, BIA, NHTSA, IHSP, IHS, FTA, other federal agencies, and State administered Federal programs . This list should include information such as application time lines, eligibility requirements, data requirements, contact information and possible uses.

2. The list of funding sources developed should be distributed within the Tribal community and updated on a periodic basis.

V. Establishing a Tribal Safety Program

The FHWA and BIA will work to develop an IRR Safety Program where funds would be set aside annually for safety related projects. This could be done in various ways, such as nationally as a new program, a set aside off the existing program or a program could be structured at the Tribal level. It is recognized that Tribes are eligible to apply for safety funds for highway improvements through the individual state's Federal Aid program, but these funds are insufficient and are not reaching the Tribes on a routine basis.

VI. Measuring Success

To determine the impact that this safety management plan is having on crashes on Indian Lands, monitoring will be necessary. The lack of comprehensive crash data on many of the Reservations will make this challenging in the near term. However, if the following measures are undertaken, the status of implementation efforts can be assessed.

1. Previous analysis of the FARS Database and state data show a significant number of Native American fatal crashes on IRR routes or as a percentage of state populations. These analyses should continue to be run on an annual basis to monitor any changes in these trends on either a national or statewide basis.

2. FHWA and BIA should encourage Tribes to use safety data in project selection for projects listed in the TIP. In addition, Tribes should be encouraged to use before/after analysis where appropriate.

3. As more tribal crash systems are developed and installed with Tribal Governments, more sophisticated tracking can be done, that includes not just fatal information but also could include injuries, property damage crashes, seat belt use, impaired drivers and other pertinent information. To achieve a system where this data could be summarized, FHWA and BIA should encourage Tribes with crash reporting systems to issue an annual report summarizing crashes for the year. A system should also be set up for data sharing between the tribes and the BIA IHSP Office to have a national data base of tribal crash statistics. This information could then be used to not just track trends for individual Tribes, but also to look at statistics on a regional and national level. Once this is achieved, BIA could then develop an annual report that not only tracks progress, but the data could be used to identify new or additional emphasis areas to be included in the SMS Implementation Plan.

VII. Steering Committee Travel and Administration

Implementation will also include the following items:

- Steering Committee meetings twice a year
- Travel by staff members to Tribal meetings to promote Safety Management System and to implement this plan

VIII. Safety Summits

State-based safety summits and at least one national safety summit will be held throughout the life of this Implementation Plan. These summits will bring safety awareness to Tribes and serve as a forum for open discussions among various safety stakeholders.

NOTE: Funding to support this plan will be reviewed each year by the BIA and FHWA, prior to approval.

Approved By:

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