



Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

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June 16, 2020

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Sent via Attention: Ms. Brittany Lundberg Brittany.lundberg@mail.house.gov

Dear Honorable Peter A. Defazio:

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, a federally recognized tribe located in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, wishes to lend its support to the INVEST in America Act and urges the House to pass it.

On behalf of the Kootenai Tribe we thank Chairman Defazio, Chair Norton, and members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for hearing our request. Thank you for supporting Tribes. The INVEST in America Act is a critical step forward in addressing the backlog of unmet transportation needs for American Indian/Alaska Natives. The bill provides Tribes with essential funding increases for Tribal Transportation and Tribal Transit programs and reinstates several key measures Tribes have long advocated for. Thank you for reinstating the exemption of the Tribal Transportation Program from the Federal obligation limitation and expanding eligible projects under Tribal Transportation Program.

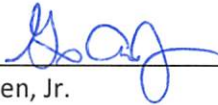
The Kootenai Tribe has long recognized the vital link between the health, commerce, cultural activities, education and the welfare of our communities and transportation infrastructure available in American Indian/Alaska Native communities. With the majority of tribal roads and bridges in poor condition we witness Tribal citizens injured and killed at a rate far in excess of other groups. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for American Indian/Alaska Native children, Native American infants are eight times more like to die in a vehicle-related crash than non-native infants and motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury for Native American adults.

While Tribes appreciate Federal appropriations for the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP), Tribal Transit Program, and Tribal safety and maintenance programs, the level of appropriations has been

wholly inadequate to address the backlog of deferred maintenance and unmet transportation needs on Indian lands. These unmet transportation needs have perpetuated disparities between Native American communities and the general population in access to education, health services, and economic opportunity.

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho is a member of the Intertribal Transportation association, (ITA), an organization of Tribes which advocates for legislation and policies to improve Tribal Transportation and Tribal Transit Programs across the nation and promote the continued advancement of transportation initiatives for American Indians/ Alaska Natives. In 2019 IT A passed a resolution and submitted a proposed bill to Congress asking for increased federal appropriations of at least \$1 billion in direct investment in tribal transportation programs as a starting point to address the government's trust responsibility to all Tribal Nations and their enrolled citizens. The Kootenai Tribe supported this resolution and is encouraged to see that beginning in FY 2022, the INVEST in America Act exceeds that goal. We urge its swift passage.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Aitken", is written over a horizontal line.

Gary Aitken, Jr.
Tribal Chairman
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho