

**STATEMENT OF
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT, ON ASSESSING THE
TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF TRIBES, FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT
AGENCIES, AND U.S. TERRITORIES**

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Chairman Norton, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of the Interior's (Interior) Federal Lands and Tribal Transportation Programs. My name is Aron Reif, Transportation Program Manager, and my focus and expertise is on the infrastructure and asset management policy aspects of these programs.

Interior oversees approximately 20 percent of all land in the United States and operates in more than 2,400 separate locations across the country. Interior-managed lands and facilities serve nearly 500 million visitors annually, provide schooling for approximately 47,000 Indian children, and are crucial to the work of 70,000 Interior employees and 280,000 volunteers. Within Interior, the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) manage significant inventories of constructed infrastructure assets with a replacement value of about \$300 billion. Among these assets are networks of transportation systems. In total, Interior is responsible for nearly 100,000 miles of road, nearly 4,000 bridges, 63 tunnels, 123 transit systems, and more than 50,000 miles of trails and primitive roads.

Interior's surface transportation network is a key component of effective Federal land management practices including wildfire prevention and response and invasive species control. It also provides recreational access for Americans to hunt, fish, and enjoy other outdoor activities on their Federal lands and is essential to enhancing the visitor experience and ensuring visitor safety. Safe and reliable transportation systems are also good for business. These systems support local communities by facilitating the efficient movement of goods and services across Federal lands by small businesses, such as river guides, tour operators, and outfitters; by allowing ranchers to move their stock to rangeland; by linking timber harvesters to saw mills; and by providing equipment access for development of energy and mineral extraction projects. Interior's constructed infrastructure assets directly enable our bureaus to fulfill our varied missions. After years of increased visitation and use, aging facilities and other vital structures are in need of reinvestment.

In FY 2018, production and activities on Interior lands in total contributed about \$183 billion to the Nation's GDP, supported about \$315 billion in economic output, and supported an estimated 1.8 million jobs.¹ According to the U.S. Commerce Department, in 2017, America's outdoor

¹ [U.S. Department of the Interior Economic Report, FY 2018](#)

economy accounted for \$427 billion of the U.S. GDP. Interior plays a major role in supporting America's outdoor economy through access to our national parks and other Federal lands. The modernization, connectivity and the state of condition of the Interior infrastructure that service these lands facilitate the quality of life and are economic engines for the communities nearby.

Aging infrastructure impacts our ability to serve the public. Many of these assets require renewal, with older assets becoming more expensive to repair and maintain in good condition. At the end of FY 2019, Interior reported \$17.3 billion in deferred maintenance and repair needs, and approximately one-half of that total is related to transportation assets—primarily roads and bridges, but also including tunnels, parking areas, trails, and infrastructure related to shuttle buses, ferries, and trams.

According to a National Academy of Sciences study, “Predicting Outcomes of Investments in Maintenance and Repair of Federal Facilities,” private industry standards require 2-4 percent of the replacement value of constructed assets be invested in maintenance each year to maintain constructed assets in good condition. In contrast, currently, Interior is able to invest less than 0.5 percent each year. Investments in capital improvements, such as roadway widening to support increased public use, are in addition to these expenses. Interior bureaus prioritize investments based on mission criticality, asset condition, mitigation of health or safety risks to employees or the public, cost/benefit analyses, and the consequences of further delays of work.

At a time of record setting visitation and rapid technological change, many key pieces of Interior infrastructure, including iconic parkways, bridges, ferries, and bus fleets, have become functionally inadequate or have exceeded their design life and require large recapitalization or rehabilitation investments to bring them back to good condition. This infrastructure requires modernization and long-term predictable investments that are critical to maintaining public access and protecting natural and cultural resources.

Federal Lands Transportation Program

The Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) is a jointly-administered program between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal land management agencies identified in statute. The FLTP is funded from the Highway Trust Fund through the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). For decades, the program has successfully played to the strengths of the partnership: Federal land management agencies are responsible for prioritizing multi-modal transportation projects and the FHWA provides program oversight, verifies program eligibility, and provides technical assistance upon request. Interior appreciates FHWA's sharing of technical knowledge and hands-on technical expertise for delivery of complex projects and capacity building. In carrying out the FLTP, Interior balances optimizing the life cycle of our existing transportation infrastructure through necessary maintenance and investments in capital improvements with our resource stewardship responsibilities.

The FLTP is the primary funding source for major capital investments in Interior transportation facilities, which are a Federal responsibility. However, other funding sources are also utilized, including fee revenue, and annual appropriations to bureaus for construction, maintenance, and

operations. A large portion of funds—more than \$300 million each year—is associated with the FLTP. This funding source has been invaluable to Interior.

A key strategy at Interior is to focus a larger share of our limited transportation funds on applying preventive maintenance techniques such as pavement seal coats. These preventive maintenance activities extend the life of pavement for a relatively low unit cost compared to the repair or reconstruction of our worst condition roads at a significantly higher unit cost. We can significantly extend the pavement life of many miles of good condition pavement for the same cost that it would take to reconstruct one mile to bring it back to good condition. This allows us to improve the condition of the entire transportation network over time, while still directing some funding towards the costly major rehabilitation or reconstruction efforts, allowing us to maximize appropriated funding.

Through analysis such as pavement deterioration modeling and total life cycle cost analysis, Interior has identified annual transportation-related needs of approximately \$1.1 billion per year to improve and maintain its transportation infrastructure in good condition, meet modernization needs, and develop a multi-modal transportation system that can accommodate future needs and welcome all Americans.

National Park Service

The National Park System includes more than 85 million acres across 419 national park units in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and U.S. Virgin Islands. About 9,600 miles of publicly accessible park roads and parkways exist, approximately 5,500 miles of which are paved. The condition ratings of paved roads are 65 percent good, 26 percent fair, and 9 percent poor. The NPS network includes approximately 1,400 public bridges and 63 public tunnels. The NPS also has 4,600 miles of front country trails.

The NPS manages 99 discrete transit systems in 65 of the 419 NPS units. These transit systems accommodate more than 43 million passenger boardings annually. Shuttle, bus, van, and tram systems make up the largest share of all system types (61 percent), followed by boat and ferry systems (33 percent), planes (2 percent), and trains and trolleys (4 percent). Of these systems, 29 provide the primary access to an NPS unit because of resource or management needs and geographic constraints.

Under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), the NPS is authorized an average of \$284 million per year, starting at \$268 million in fiscal year (FY) 2016 and growing \$8 million per year to \$300 million in FY 2020. The NPS has approximately 500 projects underway at any given time at all stages of project delivery. Some notable current projects include a rehabilitation of the Linville River Bridge on the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina (\$3.3 million), bridge preservation of the West Fork Sulphur Creek Bridge in Lassen Volcanic National Park in California (\$1.1 million), rockfall mitigation and a replacement of the Bugstuffer Culvert in Denali National Park in Alaska (\$2.7 million), a replacement of a dilapidated pier at Scorpion Anchorage at South Cruz Island in Channel Islands National Park in

California (\$13 million), and a bridge replacement on the Main Entrance and Park Central Road in National Capital-East parks (\$0.4 million).

There are also a number of large projects with high local, regional, and national interest such as Arlington Memorial Bridge in Washington DC, a major commuter artery; the Denali Road in Denali National Park, Alaska, an essential tourism feature for the park visitors; and the Tamiami Trail project in Everglades National Park, Florida, a critical component to South Florida's ecosystem restoration efforts. The NPS has identified over \$2.6 billion in potential future transportation "mega" projects which are defined as over \$25 million in project cost. The NPS celebrated this year the completion of the Going-to-the-Sun Road Reconstruction in Glacier National Park in Montana, and completion of the "missing link" section of the Foothills Parkway in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. Additionally, the rehabilitation of the Arlington Memorial Bridge is over one-half completed. These projects were some of the most recent "mega" projects that NPS has successfully leveraged NPS funds with grants from the USDOT and/or state and local government funds to complete.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The National Wildlife Refuge System managed by the FWS includes more than 855 million acres of lands and waters across 568 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts, in every state. In 2017, the FWS welcomed about 55.5 million visitors to national wildlife refuges and national fish hatcheries for recreational activities, a 13.5 percent increase from 2013. Projects completed in partnership with Federal Lands Highway make this visitation possible. According to a 2011 survey of refuge visitors, 75 percent ranked transportation elements as highly important to their satisfaction.

The FWS operates over 5,400 miles of public use roads and 5,000 parking areas, approximately 540 miles of which are paved. The FWS network includes approximately 300 public bridges, thousands of culverts, and 23 public transportation systems. The FWS also has 2,100 miles of trails and boardwalks. Most of FWS' transportation assets are near the end of their life cycle. Just 15 percent of FWS public roads and parking areas, 30 percent of FWS public bridges, and 32 percent of FWS trails and transit systems are under 20 years of age. The average age of FWS public roads, parking areas, and bridges is 42 years, and the average age for FWS transit systems and public trails is 32 years. Under the FAST Act, and previous highway reauthorization bills, the FWS receives \$30 million per year, a funding level that has been consistent since 2005.

An example of transportation infrastructure needs managed by the FWS is on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, which covers over 3,000 square miles and offers a wide array of visitor activities, including hunting, camping, and educational programs. FWS needs to rehabilitate the deteriorating Swan Lake Road, which has serious drainage and safety issues, including signage and visibility concerns due to vegetation encroachment. The project would extend the life of the asset and improve safety, access, and the overall visitor experience at the wildlife refuge. This project will require a \$14.7 million investment to complete.

Another example is at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois. With over 43,000 acres in southern Illinois, this refuge is a beloved community asset. Its original 32-mile paved roadway

network, related bridges, and adjacent parking lots have far exceeded their usable life. All assets need significant repairs just to maintain reliable public use; the refuge cannot increase capacity sufficiently to accommodate increasing public use. An \$8 million project to improve the roadways and parking lots is underway. This project will serve 17 miles of road and an additional 36,000 square yards of parking on the most traveled public routes. As the work moved forward, the scope of the project expanded and another \$2 million will be awarded for intersection safety improvements and other related road work. Due to funding constraints, construction has been phased, ultimately increasing the project's total cost.

The Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge is one of the largest public open spaces in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Recognizing the limited access opportunities to the new refuge, FWS and Bernalillo County formed a partnership and were selected for Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) funding that was leveraged with FLTP funds for a total of \$8.5 million to improve multi-modal connectivity with the community. A second multi-modal transportation expansion project was tentatively selected for FY 2023 FLAP funding with an estimated construction cost of \$8,000,000. These projects expand upon the new visitor center and FLTP-funded entrance road to greatly enhance public access, safety, and the visitor experience to the wildlife refuge.

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of land, primarily in the western states. About 45,000 miles of public roads are accessible by standard passenger cars on these lands; approximately 2,000 miles of which are paved, and another 14,000 miles are surfaced with aggregate. The condition ratings of these roads are 1 percent good, 33 percent fair, and 66 percent poor. Additionally, the BLM operates an additional 30,000 miles of primitive roads, which are only traversable by 4-wheel drive vehicle. The BLM transportation network also includes 891 public bridges and more than 15,000 miles of trails.

The FAST Act does not authorize a dedicated funding level for the BLM each year; instead, the BLM must compete with other Federal land management agencies for a share of funding averaging \$24 million per year. Under the FAST Act, the BLM has received over \$37 million in FLTP funds (between \$6.8 million and \$8.1 million per year). These funds have been used by BLM to reduce deferred maintenance and provide capital improvements and safety upgrades to existing roads that provide important access to BLM priority high use recreation sites. The BLM completed four rehabilitation projects in Oregon, Nevada, California, and Montana totaling approximately \$36 million. These projects improved access by paving aggregate roads and repaving existing asphalt roads to improve public access to river rafting, fishing, hiking, rock climbing, timber harvesting, and access to off-highway vehicle usage areas. In the design phase, the BLM has four additional rehabilitation projects underway in Montana, South Dakota, New Mexico, and Alaska, and one additional rehabilitation project that is currently under construction in Oregon; these projects will total over \$28 million in FLTP funds.

In 2017, Road and Bridge magazine listed the Red Rock Scenic Loop road rehabilitation project number 3 of their top 10 road pavement projects in North America, which was a \$14 million road rehabilitation in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area outside of Las Vegas, NV.

Work included repairs, upgrades, and repaving of 13 miles of roads. Visitor safety was improved by building two new bridges across low water crossings that previously left visitors stranded during flash floods. The BLM also added a pedestrian/bike lane adjacent to the road to support multimodal travel throughout the Red Rock NCA and reduce congestion.

Another program highlight for the BLM is the Campbell Tract project. The Campbell Tract is a 730-acre Special Recreation Management Area located on the east side of Anchorage, Alaska. It provides a 12-mile non-motorized trail system that winds through the woods. The BLM partnered with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), using Federal Lands Access Program funds to realign the intersection of East 68th Avenue and Elmore Road, and \$1.6 million of BLM FLTP funds to realign the BLM entrance road from the new intersection into Campbell Tract. This project will improve safety and year around access for motorized and non-motorized visitors.

Bureau of Reclamation

BOR provides water and electricity throughout the western United States, through a series of dams, lakes, canals, and power generation sites. The public has access to much of the land surrounding these water and power facilities. BOR owns approximately 2,800 miles of public road, 300 public vehicular bridges, and 1,300 miles of public trails.

The FAST Act does not authorize a dedicated funding level for BOR each year; instead, BOR must compete with several other Federal land management agencies for a share of a pot of funding averaging \$24 million per year. BOR was added to the FLTP in 2016 in the FAST Act, and it has been beneficial to the agency, our partners, and the public, funding over 27 projects for \$30 million in 13 of the 17 western states in which Reclamation has a presence. One of the recent FLTP projects that was completed was rehabilitating the Hoover Dam Access Road and parking areas, which had fallen into disrepair due to heavy traffic. Hoover Dam is BOR's most visited site receiving over 5.5 million visitors.

Another noteworthy FLTP project BOR has is the Ponderosa Way Bridge Replacement project. This project is located outside of Auburn, California over the North Fork of the American River. The original bridge and road system was built by the Civilian Conservation Corp in the 1930s as a fire break across the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The project cost is over \$5 million, involving a mixture of FLTP funds and BOR appropriated funds. Construction is expected to be completed in 2022.

Tribal Transportation Program

Transportation infrastructure is also a critical part of the well-being of tribal communities. Interior serves as the steward of more than 56 million acres of tribal trust lands. These lands contain more than 27,800 miles of road (including 7,300 miles of paved; 5,000 miles of gravel; and 15,500 miles of earth/primitive surfacing); 1,600 miles of trails; and approximately 1,000 bridges. These roads represent an additional \$392 million in needs that is separate from those reported for Interior's owned assets.

The largest road program for tribal nations is the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP), funded from the Highway Trust Fund through the USDOT's Federal Highway Administration and authorized by the FAST Act. During FY 2020, the TTP is authorized at \$505 million in contract authority, which is distributed as directed by Chapter 2 of Title 23 to federally-recognized tribes, through self-determination contracts or agreements. Each tribal government prioritizes its projects under this program via a Tribal Transportation Improvement Plan, approved by the Federal Highway Administration.

Public Lands Infrastructure Fund

Accompanying the President's FY 2020 budget for Interior is the re-proposal of a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund that would generate up to \$6.5 billion over five years to address investment needs in the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture. Similar legislation has been introduced on a bipartisan basis both here in the House and in the Senate, and the Secretary looks forward to working with the Congress to enact this legislation. The Administration's proposal would support infrastructure improvements through an allocation of 70 percent for national parks, 10 percent for national forests, 10 percent for national wildlife refuges, 5 percent for Bureau of Indian Education schools, and 5 percent for lands managed by BLM. The Fund will be funded through the deposit of 50 percent of all Federal energy development revenue that would otherwise be credited or deposited as miscellaneous receipts to the Treasury over the 2020–2024 period, subject to an annual limit of \$1.3 billion. Interior and Agriculture would prioritize projects, monitor implementation, and measure results. This investment will significantly improve the public's experience at many of America's most visible, visited, and treasured places.

If enacted, the Public Lands Infrastructure Fund would be used to help to address Interior's deferred maintenance backlog, including deferred maintenance attributed to our transportation infrastructure. In this way, funds generated from the highway trust fund and energy development revenue would both be deployed to improve the overall condition of our transportation network and increase or restore access to our Federal lands.

Conclusion

Interior's transportation and infrastructure system is critical to carrying out our mission and to ensure visitor enjoyment, access, and safety; to protect natural and cultural resources; and to provide access for resource development and working landscapes. We thank this committee for continued support of these transportation programs, which in turn have helped Interior to address critical investment needs of deteriorating roads and bridges, close the gap on incomplete parkways, and enhance safety for visitors and staff. Without the FLTP and TTP, our ability to care for and provide access to these significant Federal and Tribal lands would be nearly impossible. We look forward to working with this Committee and others as they consider legislation related to the Administration's proposed Public Lands Infrastructure Fund and the reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act.

Madam Chair, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Committee may have.