

American Indian Roads Program Boosted by
Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century

WASHINGTON - The Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Neal McCaleb has announced that the Department of the Interior published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the Indian Reservation Roads Program in the Federal Register on August 7, 2002. The proposed rule is the product of negotiated rulemaking between tribal representatives and Federal representatives from the Department of the Interior and the Department of Transportation under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

"Transportation is very important to public safety and to building reservation economies," said Assistant Secretary McCaleb. "This program will provide the necessary resources to rebuild and maintain transportation systems in order to improve public safety and attract potential businesses to the reservations."

The proposed rule would establish policies and procedures governing the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) Program and a proposal for allocating the \$275,000,000 in FY'03 funds. The program will expand transportation activities available to tribes and tribal organizations as well as provide guidance for planning, designing, constructing and maintaining transportation facilities.

The BIA Indian Reservation Roads Program provides funding for eligible transportation projects that provide access to or within Indian reservations, Indian lands, Indian communities and Alaska Native villages. The program consists of 55,944 miles of roads and 4,185 bridges, of which 24% of the bridges are deficient.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is holding a series of public education and information meetings on the proposed rule in the following list of cities:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Rapid City, SD | August 20, 2002 | Billings, MT | August 22, 2002 |
| Las Vegas, NV | August 27, 2002 | Sacramento, CA | August 29, 2002 |
| Gallup, NM | September 4, 2002 | Santa Fe, NM | September 6, 2002 |
| Anchorage, AK | September 10, 2002 | Portland, OR | September 12, 2002 |
| Tulsa, OK | September 17, 2002 | Oklahoma City, OK | September 19, 2002 |
| Minneapolis, MN | September 25, 2002 | Nashville, TN | September 27, 2002 |

The schedule of meetings is published in the Federal Register. The comment period for the proposed rule ends October 6, 2002. Written comments may be mailed or hand delivered to: U.S. Department of Transportation, Dockets Management Facility, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590-0001 or submitted electronically at <http://dms.dot.gov/submit>. Docket Number FHWA -2002-12229 must be included at the top of all comments.

- DOI -