Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: May 23, 1983
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Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Ken Smith, and Federal Highway Administrator Ray A. Barnhart today signed a working agreement on the use of $375 million of Federal highway funds for Indian reservations.

The agreement outlines procedures for the approval of projects, provision of technical assistance, application of Indian preference in hiring, certification standards and other details.

Under the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is receiving from the Department of Transportation $75 million in 1983 and $100 million in each of the next three years for roads construction on Indian reservations. This is the first time that the BIA has received Federal highway funds for use on reservations.

Assistant Secretary Smith said "the $375 million will generate approximately 10,000 jobs on reservations and will help tribes improve the infrastructure for economic development."

Federal Highway Administrator Barnhart, noting that the Department of Transportation has previously provided technical assistance for reservation roads projects, said: "We are pleased, through this agreement today, to share more fully in the work of building needed roads on the Indian reservations."

The BIA program of projects for 1983 has already been approved by the Federal Highway Administration and the $75 million received for 1983 will be totally obligated before October 1, 1983.