Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Tozier - Int. 4306 | Information Service
For Immediate Release: July 20, 1954
Print PDF

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay announced the details of a proposed $10,000 program under the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1954 to improve and maintain roads on Indian reservations in 24 states.

To carry out the program, the Department is asking Congress for a supplemental appropriation of $3,900,000 in addition to the amounts of $2,897,000 for Indian road construction and $2,043,000 for Indian road maintenance already appropriated for the fiscal year 1955. Contract authority in the amount of $1,160,000, provided by the Federal Aid Highway Act, would be used to round out the $10,000,000 program.

A substantial portion of these funds will be used to meet payments for contracts to be awarded to private contracting firms under competitive bidding.

The proposed program provides for grading and draining 463.8 miles of reservation roads, surfacing 436 miles, and constructing 2,594 running feet of bridges. Most of the work will be on reservations in the western states. Projects are included, however, for the Seminole reservation in Florida, the Choctaw reservation in Mississippi, the Cherokee reservation in North Carolina, and the Chippewa, Potawatomi, and Menominee reservations in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

One of the major objectives of the program will be to bring reservation roads up to acceptable standards so that they can be turned over to the counties for maintenance. Federal responsibility for constructing Indian roads is based primarily on the tax-exempt status of Indian trust lands. However, since most of the county road maintenance funds are derived from gasoline taxes and motor vehicle license fees, which Indians pay the same as other citizens, the counties are generally willing to assume maintenance of these roads after they have been improved by the Federal Government. More than 1,000 miles of reservation roads have been transferred to the counties for maintenance in the past few years.

Another important aim of the program is to promote more widespread economic and social progress and greater self-sufficiency among the Indian people. Construction of all-weather roads on the reservations will help in the marketing of Indian agricultural and livestock products, in the protection of Indian forests and the harvesting of timber, and in the development of mineral resources such as coal, uranium, fertilizer, and oil. In some areas, such as the Southwest, improvement of reservation roads will also play an important part in the Indian Bureau’s intensive drive to provide schooling for all Indian children at the earliest possible date.

To make all roads and trails improvements needed on Indian reservations, the Bureau of Indian Affairs estimates that $134,000,000 will be required. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1954 authorized $10,000,000 for Indian road construction and maintenance for the 1955 fiscal year and a like amount for the fiscal years 1956 and 1957. This is a considerable increase in the Bureau’s road program which has ranged from $3,000,000 to $6,000,000 in the postwar years.

The Bureau is currently responsible for maintaining about 15,000 miles of primary and secondary roads

and approximately 4,000 miles of truck trails serving reservations or other Indian areas.

Following are the allocations of funds proposed for each of the Bureau's administrative areas together with the more important projects contemplated under the 1955 fiscal program.

The Aberdeen Area, which covers North and South Dakota and Nebraska, will be allocated $900,000 for rad improvements. Among the more important improvements are the Shelby Bus road and the Harrison Creek road on the Crow Creek reservation in South Dakota - $91,700. On the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota improvements will be made to the American Horse Creek road, Agency streets, the Porcupine-Wounded Knee road, the Porcupine-Sharps Store road, and the Eagle Nest-Wanblee Kyle Road in the amount of $311,600. The St. Francis Spring Creek road on the Rosebud reservation is being allocated $115,800. Improvements to the Veblen South road on the Sisseton reservation will cost $71,100. The Grand River road on the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota will be allocated $119,100. On the Turtle Mountain reservation in North Dakota $55,500 will be allocated to the improvement of the Gordon Lake road and the Belcourt South road. The Santee-Howe Creek road on the Santee reservation in Nebraska will be allocated $30,500; and the Cherry Creek road on the Cheyenne River reservation in South Dakota will be allocated $104,900.

An allocation of $400,000 is being made for road construction work on the reservations in New Mexico and Colorado under jurisdiction of the former Albuquerque Area Office. Project allocations include $59,300 for the road and the Strain road on the Consolidated Ute reservation in Colorado, and in New Mexico $62,000 for the Las Norias road on the Jicarilla reservation, $64,000 for improvements on the Elk Silver road on the Mescalero reservation, $100,400 for road improvements on the San Felipe, Teseque, and Taos Pueblos, and $100,000 for the Zuni West road on the Zuni reservation.

The Anadarko Area, covering reservations in Western Oklahoma, will be allocated $195,605. This will cover improvements on the Calumet road, Canton road, the Fort Cobb River road, Spring Creek road, and the Watchhorn road. These improvements are on the Cheyenne and Arapaho Kiowa, and Pawnee Indian reservations.

An allocation of $450,000 is being made to the Billings Area which covers reservations in Montana and Wyoming. Among the projects are the Heart Butte Short Cut road on the Blackfeet reservation - $62,500; Little Horn Feeler roads on the Crow reservation - $68,500; the Agency Hays Road on the Fort Belknap reservation - $66,500; the Laredo road on the Rocky Boy's reservation - $26,000; the Wiota School roads and Box Elder-Fort Kipp road on the Fort Peck reservation - $93,800; and the Fort Washakie-Arapaho road on the Wind River reservation in Wyoming - $68,600.

An allocation of $400,000 is being made to the Minneapolis Area which covers reservations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Carolina. Among the projects are the Old South Brench and Old Stockbridge roads on the Menominee reservation in Wisconsin - $78,450; the Redby Ponensh road on the Red Lake reservation in Minnesota - $64,000; the Big Cove and Bunchess Creek roads on the Cherokee reservation in North Carolina - $67,000; the Mineral Center-Grand Portage road on the Grand Portage reservation in Minnesota - $34,000; the Mission road and Shady Rest road on the Leech Lake reservation in Minnesota - $36,000; the Reserve-Hayward road on the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation in Wisconsin - $36,250; the Wilson-Hannaville road in Upper Michigan - $32,000; the Herman road on the L'Anse reservation in Michigan - $20,540.

An allocation of $300,000 will be made to the Muskogee Area, covering eastern Oklahoma, Mississippi and Florida. Project allocations include $109,00 to the Choctaw agency for improvements to the Pearl

River-Necie and Community Loop roads in Mississippi; $151,000 to the Five Tribes agency in Eastern Oklahoma for improvements to the Milan, Dry Creek, Chewey-Chance, and Marble City roads; $47,000 to the Seminole agency in Florida for improvements on the Devils Garden road on the Big Cypress reservation, the Indian Prairie bridge on the Brighton reservation, and the Agency Reserve road on the Dania reservation.

An allocation of $999,395 will made to the Phoenix Area which covers reservations, not including Navajo, in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. Among the projects are the Valley Farm roads on the Colorado River reservation - $191,000; the Supai Canyon road on the Hualapai reservation - $35,000; the Cibeque White River on the Fort Apache reservation - $60,000; the Wadsworth-Nixon road on the Pyramid Lake reservation in Nevada - $97,500; the Covered Wells-Chuichu road on the Papago reservation in Arizona - $206,700; the Maricopa Colony and Post roads on the Gila River reservation in Arizona - $90,700; the San Carlos-Peridot road on the San Carlos reservation in Arizona - $49,000; and the White Rocks road on the Uintah and Ouray reservation in Utah - $83,000.

An allocation of $850,000 will be made to the Portland Area, covering reservations in the States of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Among the projects to be built are the Joe Moses Creek, Park City, and Silver Creek roads on the Colville reservation in Washington - $118,215; the Ford-Willpint road on the Spokane reservation in Washington - $100,000; the Shoeship-Curl-Kanine roads on the Umatilla reservation in Oregon - $40,000; the Worley-State Line road on the Coeur D'Alene reservation in Idaho - $50,000; the Sheepskin-Niwo-Lodge-Poog-Pauguitch-Silver roads on the Fort Hall reservation in Idaho - $81,625; the Lam-Codowa-Yellow Jack Spring Creek roads on the Klamath reservation in Oregon - $80,000; the Clallam Bay-Neah Bay road on the Makah reservation in Washington - $33,00; the Tahola Village Streets on the Quinault reservation in Washington - $203,000; and the Agency and Simnasho-He He roads on the Warm Springs reservation in Oregon - $101,610.

An allocation of $600,000 will be made to the Sacramento Area, covering reservations and rancherias in the State of California. Agreements have already been concluded between California counties and the Indian Bureau to take over all roads which the Indian Bureau improves. The projects include the improvement of 5.6 miles on Indian roads in Mendocino County - $75,900; Indian roads in Placer county, .8 miles - $12,000; Del Norte County Indian roads, 4.3 miles - $72,900; Indian roads in Humboldt County, which includes the Hoopa Valley reservation, 13.35 miles - $153,000; Indian roads in Inyo County, 5.0 miles -$98,800; Riverside County Indian roads, 4.0 miles - $58,300; and Sonoma County Indian roads, 1.8 miles - $38,800.

An allocation of $2,065,000 will be made to the Gallup Area to complete roads on the Navajo reservation under the long range rehabilitation program. Projects include the St. Michaels-Sawmill Junction road, 6.6 miles - $278,000; St. Michaels bridge - $15,000; the Ganado Wash bridge - $33,000; road to Ganado, 1.3 miles - $45,000; the Holbrook Junction-Keams Canyon road, 12.8 miles - $485,000; the Dinnebito Wash Bridge - $129,000; the Hamblin Wash bridge - $108,000; the Tuba City to U.S. Highway 89 road, 11 miles - $387,000; the Tuba City airstrip - $15,000; the Kayenta airstrip - $15,000; the Shiprock-Mexican Water road, 10 miles -$270,000; the Shiprock Wash bridge - $185,000; surveys and plans - $100,000.

An allocation of $535,000 is being made to the Phoenix Area for the following projects on the Hopi reservation: The Old Oraibi to Bacabi road, 3.1 miles - $199,000; the Bacabi to Dinnebito Wash road, 5.2 miles - $176,000; the Polacca Wash Bridge - $125,000; surveys and plans - $36,000.