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U.S DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SURFACE TRANSPORTATION  
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STATUS OF THE FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAY PROGRAM**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for giving the FHWA the opportunity to report on the status of the Federal Lands Highway Program (FLHP). Federal lands highways are crucial to the U.S. public lands system, providing vital links to the many different types of Federal lands, including our national parks and national forests, as well as the Indian reservation system. As I will explain in more detail in a few moments, while FLHP faces great challenges in the years ahead, we are working hard to meet those challenges.

**Program Created**

The FLHP was created by the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 (STAA). Prior to the enactment of the STAA, the different categories of roads serving the various Federal lands were not well coordinated. As a result, these roads were not well understood as a total system, nor were they recognized as part of the Nation's overall transportation system. The STAA brought together, for the first time, a consolidated and coordinated long-range funded FLHP consisting of forest highways, public lands highways, Indian reservation roads, and park roads and parkways. The primary purpose of the Federal lands highway system of public roads is to serve the transportation needs of Federal lands, which are neither a State nor a local government responsibility. The Federal lands highway

system of roads serve recreational travel and tourism, protect and enhance natural resources, provides sustained economic development in rural areas, and provides needed transportation for Native Americans.

### **The Federal Lands Highway System**

The Federal lands highway system comprises nearly 80,000 miles of public roads and almost 3,500 bridges and tunnels. Federal lands highways serve as the principal public roads connecting and serving over 700 million acres of public lands, forests, national parks, trust lands, and reserves. Nearly one-half (30,000 miles) of these Federal lands highways are considered outstanding scenic roads, the majority of which are considered America's premier scenic byways. Many Federal lands highways were constructed between 50 to 70 years ago and some even have historic designation.

The system may be broken down into various categories. First, there are over 8,000 miles of national park roads and parkways with over 1,400 bridges and tunnels under the National Park Service's (NPS) jurisdiction. Next, the Indian reservation road system consists of 45,000 miles, of which 20,000 miles and some 700 bridges are owned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the remaining 25,000 miles are under State and local governments. The 25,000-mile forest highway system (with 1,400 bridges) is principally under the jurisdiction of State and local public authorities. Not included in this inventory, nor part of the FLHP, are 400,000 miles of Federal non-public administrative and land access management roads and trails, which connect to the Federal lands highway system.

### **FLHP Funding and the ISTEA**

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) made a

structural change which reduced the four program categories into three by combining the forest highways and the public lands highway categories into a single public lands highway element. Even though these two categories were combined into a single category, in effect the forest highway program was continued with 66 percent of the authorized funds to be allocated based on relative National forest transportation needs, and 34 percent to be administered as a discretionary program.

The ISTEA authorized \$371 million for the FLHP in FY 92 and \$446 million (average) for each of the fiscal years 1993 through 1997.

### **Implementing ISTEA Provisions**

The FHWA administers the FLHP primarily through its headquarters Federal Lands Highway Office and its three field divisions. Longstanding partnerships with the Forest Service (FS), NPS, BIA, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have been the hallmark of coordination and cooperation. Some interagency agreements, with minor changes from time to time, have been in existence for over 75 years. With this governmental and technical infrastructure in place, the agencies have continued to respond and carry out a coordinated program as envisioned in the STAA and carried forward in the ISTEA.

### **Meetings**

Following the enactment of ISTEA, the Federal Lands Highway Headquarters and field divisions held numerous meetings with the Federal Lands agencies and various State highway agencies. These meetings served to inform those agencies of changes in FLHP requirements and to reach agreements among them on implementing the ISTEA provisions. In cooperation with other Federal agencies, we also sponsored and participated in

conferences to discuss strategies to improve transportation for economic development, travel and tourism, outdoor recreation, resources management, scenic byways, and land use preservation.

More recently, our FHWA offices have been cooperating with the BIA to jointly sponsor four National Tribal Leaders Transportation Meetings. Also, we are participating in a Transportation Research Board conference to explore solutions to Native American transportation and economic development problems. All of these meetings are intended to improve dialogue with Indian tribal governments, to discuss Indian transportation issues, share information on the Indian Reservation Roads program, and explain the other transportation and economic funding opportunities provided by ISTEA.

### **Forest Highways**

The interim guidance for administering the forest highway program was issued December 26, 1991. This guidance provided for continuing with the previous forest highway program regulations and procedures. We plan to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking to implement those ISTEA provisions affecting the Forest Highway portion of the program in the near future. The BLM has been invited, for the first time, to participate in forest highway tri-agency program meetings between the FS, State highway agencies, and the FHWA. Over \$89,900,000 was allocated in FY 92 and \$109,200,000 will be allocated in FY 93.

### **Indian Reservation Roads**

There are several new provisions in ISTEA that pertain to the Indian reservation roads program. We have jointly developed interim guidance for implementing those

provisions setting aside 2 percent of the Indian reservation roads funds for Indian tribal governments to undertake transportation planning under Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act procedures. The ISTEA permitted Indian reservation roads funds to be used for sealing paved roads owned by the BIA, of which approximately \$8 million was used in FY 92. The ISTEA also provided that a minimum of one percent of the apportioned highway bridge replacement and rehabilitation (HBRR) funds be reserved in States having Indian reservation road bridges and transferred those funds to the BIA. The Indian Reservation Roads Interagency Agreement between FHWA and BIA was amended to incorporate the HBRR provisions on August 7, 1992. Also, interim guidance on use of IRR funds was issued June 30, 1992. Over \$152,000,000 was allocated in FY 92 and \$181.4 million will be allocated in FY 93.

#### **Park Roads and Parkway Funds**

Interim guidance on the use of park road and parkway funds was issued June 30, 1992. The NPS has taken the lead in undertaking the study, required by § 1050 of the ISTEA, of alternate transportation in parklands. A draft report is to be completed by June 1993. Also, the shale oil modified asphalt study test strip provided for under Section 6016(d) will be constructed in FY 93 in the Grand Teton National Park. Over \$75,500,000 was allocated in FY 92 and \$81,000,000 will be allocated in FY 93.

#### **Public Lands Highways Discretionary Funds**

The administrative public lands highway discretionary funds procedures were adjusted to reflect the new provisions in § 1032 of the ISTEA. Some of the States, including two of the 11 Western States, with three percent of the total United States public lands, elected not

to apply for public lands highway discretionary funding. We attribute this reluctance to those provisions in § 1015 that require the States' hold harmless allocations to be reduced if a State received public lands highway discretionary funds in the previous year. For the first time, as provided in the ISTEA, the FHWA allocated funds in FY 92 and FY 93 to cover the BLM's administrative costs related to the public lands highway program. Over \$45 million in public lands highway discretionary funds were allocated in FY 92, and we have allocated \$60.6 million in FY 93.

Section 1032 of the ISTEA provided for the development of transportation planning procedures for the FLHP. Also, § 1025 of the ISTEA required that all Federal Lands Highway projects be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Interim procedures were issued in June 1992 for the STIP submissions. The FHWA is cooperating with the NPS, BIA, and FS in developing transportation planning procedures which include coordination of Federal land management and transportation plans with statewide transportation planning.

The FLHP safety, bridge, and pavement management systems are also required by § 1032. Concepts and procedures are currently under development. They will be coordinated and similar to those required for Federal-aid highways. Section 1032 also requires a study to determine if the method of allocating FLHP funds is meeting the relative transportation needs of the Federal lands served. This study is underway; we plan to complete it by December 18, 1993.

Taken as a whole, the ISTEA made several adjustments and placed many new requirements on the FLHP. As difficult and resource demanding as it may be, we are

pleased to report that there has been a cooperative Federal agency effort in successfully moving the FLHP forward while meeting the changes and challenges.

#### **FY 1994 Budget**

The Administration's FY 94 budget proposes an increased authorization for the FLHP of \$36 million. Of this, \$23 million would be applied to the park road and parkway program. With increased authorization levels in FY 94 through 97, the total of proposed funding increases for the FLHP would be \$577 million with \$318 million (55 percent) invested in the park road and parkway program. This is a 22 percent program increase over the ISTEA authorization levels.

#### **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, I would like to conclude my testimony by expressing our appreciation for the Committee's interest and support in the Federal Lands Highway Program. I thank you for this opportunity to appear with our partner Federal agencies and present, for the first time, coordinated Federal lands highway testimony. We look forward to working with you and your staff as we continue to implement the ISTEA. Our Nation takes great pride and enjoyment in our Federal lands. The FLHP is an important transportation investment for their preservation and the sustained enjoyment of future generations.