



# Oglala Sioux Tribe

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Office of the President  
Kevin Killer

August 4, 2021

Peter Paul Montgomery Buttigieg  
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Oglala Sioux Tribe RAISE Planning Grant 2021

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation respectfully and enthusiastically requests RAISE funding for the BIA 2 Rural Safety and Regional Access Project to complete the necessary planning and preconstruction activities. RAISE funds are essential for planning as the entire Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is an area of persistent poverty. The Tribe simply does not have the funding available to carry out the project without the necessary infusion of RAISE funds.

In addition to long lasting regional poverty, our transportation budget has been negatively impacted by lower census numbers and emergency repairs after the storms of 2019. In 2020 and again this year we are continuing to repair roads damaged from the 2019 storms and much of the repairs are deemed ineligible for funding from the FHWA's Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) resulting in lost overall budget for our planned road projects for the next several years. We have no way to recover this loss of budget nor fund the planning and preconstruction activities needed to make BIA Route 2 "shovel-ready".

BIA Route 2, being one of the Reservation's main arterial routes, connects the northeastern region of the Reservation, including the Tribe's Eagle Nest and Medicine Root Districts and the communities of Wanblee, Potato Creek, Kyle and many other smaller yet very important Tribal Housing communities. In this region of the Reservation, BIA Route 2 serves as the only route available for school buses, transit buses, Tribal members, truck deliveries for the Food Distribution, commerce, gravel pit and agricultural trucking, and emergency personnel and is in dire need of reconstruction. Not only do our roads provide access, but the construction projects to construct roads provide jobs for members of the Tribe who may not have other sources of income. Our roads provide a lifeline for Tribal members to employment, education, and goods and services.

The current condition of BIA Route 2 from Kyle to SD Highway 44 is substandard and dangerous with its sharp curves, narrow lanes, lack of shoulders and nonrecoverable side slopes.

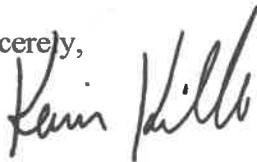
There have been many accidents and loss of life along this route and it is no surprise that a Road Safety Audit conducted in 2018 recommended complete reconstruction. Our tribal emergency response and maintenance crews have ruled this segment of BIA Route 2 unsafe and they avoid the road unless it is absolutely necessary.

In order to provide safe roads Reservation-wide that allow our emergency services to reach all tribal members, it is imperative that the Tribe resurfaces essential existing roads. Within this section of BIA Route 2 are existing gravel pits and ample gravel resources of which the Tribe plans to mine. It is imperative the road be upgraded to support the existing truck traffic and increases to truck traffic which will be needed for the Tribe's plans for gravel mining. We estimate the backlog of work needed to bring non paved roads where many Tribal members live to current safety standards is \$815,133,200.

Recently the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council designated the Crazy Horse Scenic Byway, which includes this segment of BIA Route 2 from Kyle to SD Highway 44. With the tribal designation, a proposal for state designation was submitted in May 2020 to the South Dakota Department of Transportation. State designation of a scenic byway would enable the SD Department of Tourism to assist the Tribe with promoting tourism economic growth on the Reservation. With this pending designation, it is critical for the Tribe to be awarded RAISE funds to address this segment of BIA Route 2, to reconstruct it to current federal safety standards, and to incorporate tourism pull-offs and breathtaking Badlands overlooks which would entice travelers to visit the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is one of the poorest reservations in the nation and needs funding to get our roads up to the safety standards experienced by other communities in the Nation. Transportation projects also provide much-needed jobs for our Tribe where more than 50% of the population is below the poverty line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Killer". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

President Kevin Killer  
Oglala Sioux Tribe