



## United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

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### USET Resolution No. 2015:031

#### **TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION UNITY ACT AND THE TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION SELF-GOVERNANCE ACT OF 2015**

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-six (26) federally recognized Tribes; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribe, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribes' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** Tribal governments have responsibilities similar in many respects to that of states and local governments in delivering and maintaining transportation infrastructure, yet Tribal governments face unique limitations in their ability to generate revenues that leave Tribes uniquely reliant upon federal government transportation resources; and
- WHEREAS,** federal funding for Tribal transportation has not kept pace with the resources devoted to other aspects of the national roads and transportation network; and
- WHEREAS,** the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a hearing on April 22, 2015, entitled, " Tribal Transportation: Pathways to Safer Roads in Indian Country," which highlighted that transportation infrastructure serving Tribal communities is among the most unsafe, rudimentary, and unreliable in the country; further noting that motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death for Native Americans ages 1 through 34; and
- WHEREAS,** the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs has also stressed the importance to Indian Tribes of developing their economies to promote job growth and community stability, but that doing so requires adequate infrastructure, including roads. The Committee has noted that when adequate infrastructure is in place, Indian Tribes are best positioned to implement economic development plans; and
- WHEREAS,** even the Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) acknowledges the Indian Reservation Roads System to be "among the most rudimentary of any transportation network in the United States"; and
- WHEREAS,** transportation infrastructure is the cornerstone to the wellbeing of Indian reservations and communities. The inadequate condition of Tribal transportation systems impacts health care, schools, public safety, and Tribal economies; and
- WHEREAS,** Congress has supported Indian Tribes, in the past several surface transportation bills, in developing transportation programs and projects that are increasingly responsive to local needs and that allow for Tribal innovations that enhance program effectiveness and stretch federal dollars. Today most Indian Tribes conduct transportation planning, design and develop

transportation systems and implement infrastructure improvements themselves through agreements with the BIA and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) based on the authority provided in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA); and

**WHEREAS,** Tribes have demonstrated that they are best positioned to ensure the effective and efficient use of federal transportation infrastructure funds, and shown their effectiveness as solid partners in providing Tribal citizens and the public with improved infrastructure, enhanced mobility and greater access to transportation services; and

**WHEREAS,** Congressional leaders from both parties have identified the transportation reauthorization as a priority of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. The current highway authorization, MAP-21, is a two-year authorization that was scheduled to expire at the end of Fiscal Year 2014, but has been extended to May 31, 2015. Congress and the Administration are developing proposals for the new authorization; and

**WHEREAS,** it is critical that Indian Tribes nationally advance a unified agenda to effectively advance Tribal provisions in the reauthorization bill. The National Congress of American Indians, the Intertribal Transportation Association and the newly-formed Tribal Transportation Unity Caucus have worked to ensure that Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations are working in collaboration in an effort to develop and promote the "Tribal Transportation Unity Act," a proposal for comprehensive Tribal transportation legislation which provides for increased funding for the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) and the Tribal Transit, Tribal Bridge and Tribal Safety Programs, restored funding for Tribal High Priority Projects, the creation of a Tribal Infrastructure Bank, the expansion of Tribal Self-Governance to the United States Department of Transportation (DOT), along with and various administrative and technical improvements for Tribal transportation; and

**WHEREAS,** on February 25, 2015, Representatives Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Don Young (R-AK) introduced the "Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Act of 2015" (HR 1068), legislation that adopts an important component of the Tribal Transportation Unity Act that would expand Tribal Self-Governance to programs and divisions within the DOT; and

**WHEREAS,** the extension of self-governance to the DOT is consistent with the congressional goal of streamlining federal regulations, expediting project delivery, and providing greater flexibility at the local level as it would allow Tribes to obtain all of their transportation funds under one DOT agreement that could include not only the Tribal Transportation Program funds, but also transit, safety, federal-aid and other DOT funds and would thereby streamline Tribal efforts to obtain and administer such funds; and

**WHEREAS,** in December 2010, the United States recognized the rights of its First Peoples through its support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), whose provisions and principles support and promote the purposes of this resolution; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED** the USET Board of Directors supports the proposed terms set forth in the Tribal Transportation Unity Act and will work with Members of Congress, Congressional Committees and their staff to

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advocate for the adoption of Tribal provisions in the next surface transportation legislation; and be it further

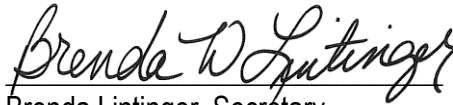
**RESOLVED** the USET Board of Directors supports the Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Act of 2015 and will work with Members of Congress, Congressional Committees and their staff to incorporate the provision of the Act within the next surface transportation legislation or as stand-alone Tribal transportation legislation.

**CERTIFICATION**

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Semi-Annual Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Mashantucket, CT, May 20, 2015.



Brian Patterson, President  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.



Brenda Lintinger, Secretary  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

*“Because there is strength in Unity”*