MERIT CRITERIA

The Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) Department of Transportation Facility Project (the Project) addresses efficiency, mobility, connectivity, accessibility, transportation vulnerabilities, and construction and maintenance burdens on the Lake Traverse Reservation, a Rural and Historically Disadvantaged Community. The Project responds to existing issues by constructing a new facility that will serve as a single consolidated location for administrative functions for the Tribal Transit and Transportation staff. It will provide SWO's first electric transit vehicle, safe and secure transit and maintenance vehicle storage, in-house vehicle maintenance and washing bays, and a covered sand/salt storage area to help SWO Road Maintenance better serve the Lake Traverse Indian Reservation. Site improvements include new landscaping, security fencing, parking layout, and zero emissions charging infrastructure. There is a current agreement between Tribal Transit and Community Transit, a 501(c)3 non-profit agency. The agreement has been necessary due to SWO having limited capacity, staff, and no space to park their buses. Community Transit assists Tribal Transit with local routes between Agency Village, where Tribal Headquarters is located, and Sisseton by transporting residents to and from employment, healthcare, educational institutions, and essential services. This gives Tribal Transit the ability to provide on-demand response services to all seven districts on the Reservation as well as off-peak transportation services to locations such as pow wows, tribal elder days, and school sporting events. The Project aims to improve service reliability and safety, address state of good repair, promote public transit usage, and reduce transportation-related air pollution with the addition of an electric transit vehicle and less idle time for snow removal and maintenance vehicles.



Safety

SWO has committed to making transportation safety a priority. This includes all people who travel on the Tribal, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), State, County and Township transportation systems. SWO has a history of successful safety efforts, using educational, environmental, engineering and enforcement efforts, through a collaboration of Tribal Programs along with other state and county transportation entities in the northeast corner of South Dakota, focused on creating safer roadways. The Project directly aligns with the Tribe's 2019 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the 2019 Tribal Transportation Safety Plan (TTSP).

The poverty rate on the Lake Traverse Reservation is estimated at 40.8 percent. The unemployment rate is approximately 50 percent[1], compared to 2 percent for the state of South Dakota. Due to these increased levels of poverty and unemployment, fewer individuals own or have access to a private vehicle. In addition, those cars being utilized are often older and/or in a state of disrepair, making

[1] Economic Conditions of the Lake Traverse Reservation — santicola & company

them unsafe to drive, particularly in hazardous winter weather conditions. The Lake Traverse Reservation is also extremely rural in nature, encompassing a vast land area, with burdensome distances between Reservation communities. Having access to safe, reliable, and uninterrupted transit service is extremely important.

In 2022, the SWO started initial planning for a Transportation Facility as part of the larger goal of operating a fully in-house transit service. SWO conducted a Transit Study to determine the feasibility of developing an in-house transit program to serve the residents of the Lake Traverse Reservation. Results from the SWO Transit Survey show that twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents did not have their own personal vehicle as their primary means of transportation. Half of those without their own personal vehicle said the current bus service does not meet their needs. Additionally, sixty-seven percent (67%) of all respondents would use transit if it became more available. According to the American Public Transportation Association[2], in **areas where public transit is made available and attractive, pedestrian fatalities decrease by as much as fifty percent** (50%). There were five (5) pedestrian fatalities on the Lake Traverse Reservation from 2009-2023. Based off the current statistics, expanding SWO transit service theoretically prevents 2 or 3 fatalities on the Lake Traverse Reservation in the next 15 years.



Currently, there are no shelters or benches along the transit route. To increase safety and comfort for transit riders, the Project will incorporate site specific actions identified in USDOT's Improving Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists Assessing Transit Report. Fixed shelters with benches will be constructed at the Dakota Connection Casino, Indian Health Services (IHS), Sisseton-Wahpeton College, and the Tribal Administration building. **Shelters will improve efficiency** for rider pick up as it identifies where the transit stop is located and **provides safety** from on-coming motorists and protection from severe weather conditions.



Often Road Maintenance staff are also early responders assisting in clearing roads during storms for **emergency services** to safely pass or to enact detour operations as necessary. Having equipment stored outside increases warm up and idle time, and sand stored outside often freezes into clumps, increasing the time needed to crush material prior to dispatching for emergency purposes. Most often in severe weather events, extra minutes can lead to the difference between life or death especially in extremely rural areas where response times are already increased. The Project will provide storage space needed to keep maintenance vehicles warm and ready to dispatch in case of emergencies and a covered salt/sand storage area minimizing the time needed to prep materials for use.

[2] https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Hidden-Traffic-Safety-Solution-Public-Transportation.pdf



The current Road Maintenance facility does not have security fencing in place leaving vehicles, maintenance equipment, and fuel all stored outside with no safety control systems in place. According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Standards Development Program Recommended Practices[3], fencing systems should be integrated with other security standards and best practices, such as crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), lighting, and barriers to provide protection and enhance other security solutions. The proposed new facility will include **secured fencing, security cameras, and lighting**. Additional safety measures will include **fire suppression** in the fleet storage area, and training and education for transit and maintenance staff as well as local fire personnel on how to handle emergency situations involving electric vehicles.

Environmental Sustainability

The Project will address the negative environmental impacts of transportation by enabling Tribal Transit's to purchase its first zero-emission vehicle, which will **reduce carbon emissions** and **improve air quality**. SWO is requesting funding to purchase one electric transit vehicle, installation of two Level 2 chargers, and upgrades to existing electrical infrastructure. The electric vehicle infrastructure will support any future replacement of diesel-powered vehicles with electric vehicles for local routes, ultimately reducing harmful emissions negatively impacting residents across Lake Traverse Reservation. The new transportation facility building will provide space to store vehicles inside, providing additional environmental and maintenance benefits. For the electric transit vehicle this will provide warm charging and storage that will maximize EV battery life to achieve more range in the rural service area. Installing the Level 2 charger will enable the electric vehicle to be recharged overnight when transit services are not being provided for greater efficiency and at less cost than the installation of a Level 3 charger. For gas- and diesel-powered engines, inside storage decreases emissions by decreasing idle and warm up time by keeping engines warm for fluid and oil stability, which leads to better running engines.

Tribal Transit service operates on an on-demand basis. Ridership data from FY24 shows a total of 16,634 rides totaling 154,681 miles. This is up fifty-eight percent (58%) from FY23 (10,500 rides) and ninety-two percent (92%) from FY21 (8,656 rides). The Tribe currently owns four transit vehicles and would like to purchase a new electric transit vehicle to evaluate efficiency and capacity for use on local routes between Agency Village, where tribal headquarters is located, the Sisseton-Wahpeton College, and the town of Sisseton where residents' access employment and essential services. The Tribe would like to eventually transition additional vehicles to electric for local routes but due to the rural area and number of miles traveled in a day, the most reliable and efficient vehicles are still being determined for long term sustainability.

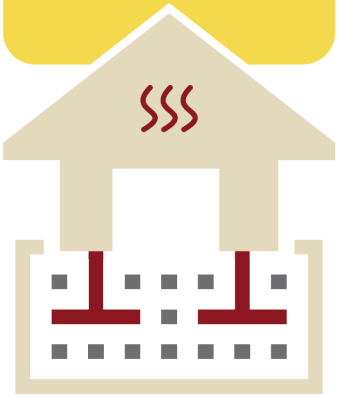
[3] https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Standards_Documents/APTA-SS-SIS-RP-003-10.pdf

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITY PROJECT

2025 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant

Transportation is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the United States—as well as one of the fastest-growing sources. National inventories suggest the transportation sector generates approximately 29 percent of the Nation's GHG emissions, and roadway vehicles account for about 83 percent of that. Integrating consideration of GHG emissions into transportation planning and decision-making is a critical step toward meeting national reduction goals and reducing climate impact. The Project will **improve transit system reliability and decrease GHG emissions** from gas- and diesel-powered engines by being stored the indoor heated facility reducing idle and warm up time for transit and maintenance vehicles. Incorporating a zero-emission transit vehicle into the transit fleet will also decrease GHG emissions along the local routes and decrease environmental impacts for tribal residents.

*The use of geothermal heat pumps = **80% lower** use of fossil fuels*



New facility **will save approximately $14,000 per year** for a building comparable in size, or ***a savings of 51%*** over the cost of propane heating.

The current Road Maintenance facility is not energy efficient, nor environmentally sustainable. It is a pole frame building with metal siding, dirt floor, and single-family-residence-grade electricity and water service. It is in desperate need of repair, however, upgrades to the facility are not economical, nor would they provide the space needed to address the Tribe's long-term plans of adding additional staff. The new facility will incorporate a **geothermal heat system for self-sustaining energy efficiency**. By using geothermal technology in the building, we used the Geothermal Cost Savings Calculator to determine the cost savings through reduced heating costs, savings of about $14,000 per year for a building comparable in size, or a savings of 51% over the cost of propane heating (no natural gas line is available near the site to provide service). Additionally, the use of geothermal heat pumps translates to an 80% lower use of fossil fuels.



Current sand/salt storage

Currently, the Tribe's sand/salt storage is kept in a pile outside and is subject to the natural elements. Frequent precipitation dissolves the salt, which then moves with the runoff to brooks, wetlands, and ground water. Once in the ground water, salt can **affect drinking water** and is impossible to clean, reduce or eliminate. Additionally, having the sand/salt outside, results in freezing and chunking in the winter months, causing added maintenance and employee time to break the sand apart by hand so it can be feed into the sanders without clogging. The Project will include a covered



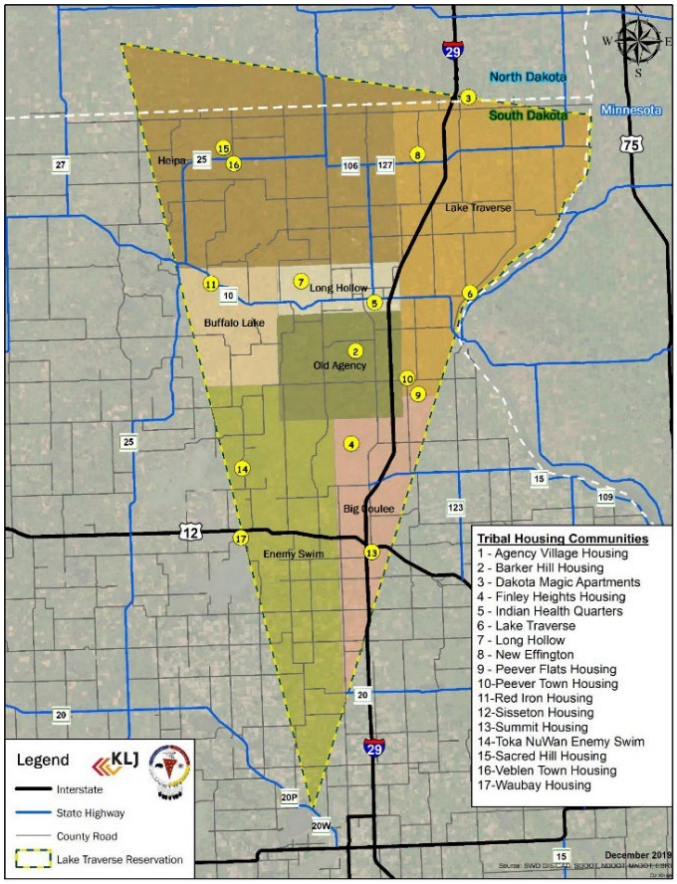
Example of covered sand/salt storage

sand/salt storage area that will serve all of the Lake Traverse Reservation. Covered sand-salt storage buildings **minimize the possibility of contaminating ground and surface water with salt runoff**, eliminate the economic loss of salt that is dissolved and washed away by precipitation, and makes the mixed material easier to load and spread.

Quality of Life

The Lake Traverse Reservation is home to many individuals and families in financially sensitive situations, with 40.8 percent of people living in poverty and a 50 percent unemployment rate[4], compared to the State of South Dakota's unemployment rate currently averaging about 2 percent. The reservation has a population of 11,391 people with Sisseton being its largest community with a population of 2,479 people. Sisseton is the regional hub providing access to goods and services, health care, education, employment, childcare, and recreation, and Agency Village is the headquarters for tribal services.

The Tribal Transit program is critical to providing accessibility to communities and related family and service connections. Without the transit program, several destinations throughout the Reservation would be inaccessible to residents, specifically those who are elderly, disabled, have school-aged children, and/or who have no private vehicle access. The Tribal Transit program provides access to jobs, education, training, and healthcare opportunities, enhancing access and related quality of life benefits.



As stated above, twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents of the Transit Survey did not have their own personal vehicle as their primary means of transportation, limiting their access to essential services and goods and isolating them from educational and workforce opportunities. Half of those without their own personal vehicle said the current bus service does not meet their needs. Additionally, sixty-seven percent (67%) of all respondents would use transit if it became more available. The Tribal Transit system is frequently utilized by a vast number of residents. The Project will provide the needed capacity to increase Tribal Transits efficiency which is imperative to **improving access to daily destinations for residents of the Lake Traverse Reservation**.

The Lake Traverse Reservation is made up of seven districts, which include Enemy Swim, Old

[4] Economic Conditions of the Lake Traverse Reservation — santicola & company

Agency, Big, Coulee, Long Hollow, Heipa (Veblen), Lake Traverse, and Buffalo Lake. Districts include multiple housing subdivisions including Agency Village, Barker Hill Housing, Dakota Magic Apartments, Finley Heights Housing, Indian Health Quarters, Lake Traverse, Long Hollow, New Effington, Peever Flats Housing, Peever Town Housing, Red Iron housing, Sisseton housing, Summit Housing, Toka NuWan Enemy Swin, Sacred Hill's Housing, Veblen Town Housing, and Waubay Housing. Access to safe and reliable transportation facilities, including transit services, especially for these rural housing communities is imperative. Economic sustainability and quality of life are all enhanced when a strong transportation system is provided to meet the needs of all users.

Ridership data from FY24 shows a total of 16,634 rides totaling 154,681 miles. This is up fifty-eight percent (58%) from FY23 (10,500 rides) and ninety-two percent (92%) from FY21 (8,656 rides).

The purchase of the additional transit vehicle along with the four buses that the Tribe currently own are a key part of the Tribe's goal of establishing in-house transit services and increasing the availability of rides for off-peak services such as rides to pow wow's, tribal elder days, and school sporting events. According to the American Public Transportation Association, the average household spends 16 cents of every dollar on transportation, and 93% of this goes to buying, maintaining, and operating cars, the largest expenditure after housing. A household can save more than $13,000 by taking public transportation and living with one less car[5]. Implementation of the Project will provide to **more affordable transportation choices** and **reducing the need for vehicle dependence** in this rural, historically disadvantaged community.



Particularly in winter months, if roads are not maintained and transit service cannot safely operate, communities both on and off the Reservation become inaccessible, leaving already isolated residents stranded. With completion of the Project, Road Maintenance staff will have access to maintenance/snow removal equipment and supplies they need to provide uninterrupted public transportation and to maintain the roadways during inclement weather. This in turn allows for roads to remain open for necessary travel, ensuring quality of life for Reservation residents.

BIA has a program agreement with the Tribal Road Maintenance program to assist BIA in clearing 120 miles of routes. The Tribe uses TTP maintenance funds to assist with BIA road clearing in the winter. Additionally, the Tribal Road Construction program maintains certain non-federal roads. These routes, which serve elderly, dialysis, and terminal patients, are identified through collaboration with SWO Emergency Management Services and Indian Health Services. This adds

[5] Public Transportation Facts - American Public Transportation Association (apta.com)

approximately 200 miles of non-federal access roads across the Lake Traverse Reservation. This off-system work is funded with gaming funds from the Tribe's casinos. It is the Tribe's goal to take over the BIA Road Maintenance Program through PL93-638 contracting. Many other tribes have done the same to streamline and provide better DOT services, road maintenance, and snow removal services throughout the Reservation. At that time, BIA staff, their equipment, and their funding package would be incorporated into the space and operation of the proposed new DOT facility.

Currently, Tribal Transit, DOT Administration, and Road Maintenance all work in different facilities. This causes coordination challenges and difficulty in communications. The Project will improve efficiency and coordination efforts between all three transportation entities by providing adequate space for SWO Transit to grow their capacity and staff to run their own community transit service, provide adequate space for vehicles and maintenance equipment to be stored and maintained, and provide for more efficient access during emergencies and inclement weather that may require a snowplow to clear roads for emergency services. The Project increases affordable transportation choices and decreases transportation and maintenance burdens for the Tribe and the Reservation residents.

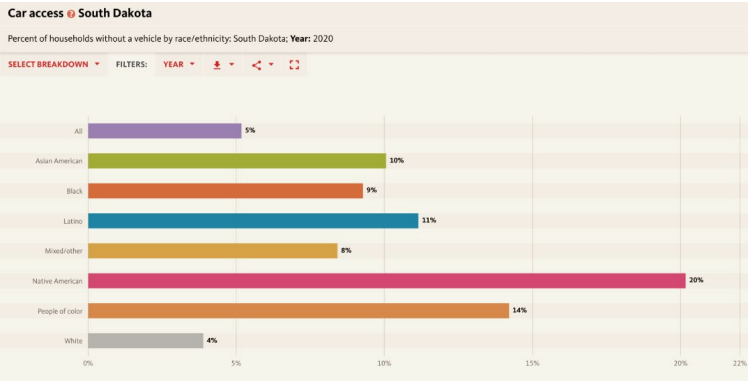
Mobility and Community Connectivity

Currently, Tribal Transit, DOT administration, and Road Maintenance all work out of different facilities. Tribal Transit is working out of the Community Transit, Inc. (Community Transit) office in Sisseton; DOT administration staff, consisting of the director, finance manager and transit administrator, are located at the Tribal Administration building in Agency Village; and Road Maintenance is working out of a pole shed on a parcel of land owned by the Tribe south of the city of Sisseton, where the new combined facility would be located. The existing Road Maintenance building is in desperate need of repair, however upgrades to the current facility would not be economical, nor provide the space needed for the Tribe's long-term plans to increase staff and transition to an in-house transit service. Additionally, keeping the three branches of transportation in separate facilities brings many challenges with communication, coordination, and service efficiency that will be remedied with the Project.



There is a current agreement between Tribal Transit and Community Transit that has recently been extended due to SWO having limited capacity, staff, and no space to park their buses. Community Transit provides transit services to eight counties in South Dakota and currently assists facilitation of transit service between Agency Village, where Tribal Headquarters is located, and Sisseton. This process ensures access for Reservation residents to and from employment, healthcare, educational institutions, and essential services, giving Tribal Transit the ability to provide on-demand response service to all seven Reservation districts as well as off-peak services such as rides to pow wow's, tribal elder days, and school sporting events.

As stated above, twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents of the Transit Survey did not have their own personal vehicle as their primary means of transportation, limiting their access to essential services and goods and isolating them from educational and workforce opportunities. Half of those without their own personal vehicle said the current bus service does not meet their needs. Additionally, sixty-seven percent (67%) of all respondents would use transit if it became more available. The Tribal Transit system is frequently utilized by a vast number of residents. The Project will provide the needed capacity to increase Tribal Transits efficiency which is imperative to **improving mobility and community connectivity for residents of the Lake Traverse Reservation**.



Aligning with the data above, according to the National Equity Analysis[6], 20 percent of Native American households in the state of South Dakota do not have access to a car. For this reason, the transit system is imperative to increasing transportation efficiency, safety, and improving mobility. According to FY24 ridership data, most riders were in the general public category, with elderly citizens as the next highest category, followed by school age youth making up the 3rd highest number of riders. Ridership data indicates in FY24 there were 16,634 rides given to residents of the Lake Traverse Reservation, up fifty-eight percent (58%) from FY23 (10,500 rides) and ninety-two percent (92%) from FY21 (8,656 rides). The most frequently occurring trip purposes were for shopping, employment, and medical appointments.

The **Project is identified in the 2019 SWO Long Range Transportation Plan**. Public engagement was conducted in developing the plan. Input from these meetings was incorporated into the planning. At that time, participants identified several transportation issues creating concerns in the community, with transit and transit services identified as one the biggest needs. Public transit has been increasingly recognized as an element of livability and a factor in economic progress. Transit is considered a basic public service and a means of enhancing access to facilities and reducing traffic congestion. For many members of the Tribe, the transit service is their primary means of transportation within the community.

Without transit access, residents would be significantly restricted in their ability to access essential services, enhance their lives, and increase their economic opportunities. Tribal Transit service has fixed local routes but otherwise operates on an on-demand basis. The purchase of the additional transit vehicle along with the four buses that the Tribe currently owns, are a key part of the Tribe's goal of establishing in-house transit services and providing increased rides for off-peak services such as rides to pow wows, tribal elder days, and school sporting events. Eventually, SWO would like to expand their on-call service to include additional services off the reservation like VA appointments in Fargo and Sioux Falls.

[6] https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car_access?geo=02000000000046000&breakdown=by-race-ethnicity

The ability for the Transit program to maintain vehicles as cost-effectively as possible, to house staff efficiently, and to welcome community members to a safe and accessible facility, is a critical piece of maintaining the transit system's ability to serve the community. The new Transportation Facility would be located at a more centralized location for access to the entire reservation and its residents. The new combined services facility will provide a public waiting area and restrooms, staff offices, conference room, public parking spaces, and ensure ADA accessibility. The facility combined with the purchase of the new electric transit vehicle will improve system-wide connectivity with accessible transit on the Lake Traverse Reservation. Additionally, the ability for Road Maintenance to have vehicles stored inside in inclement weather and access to covered salt/sand storage will **improve system-wide connectivity** and **ensure accessibility** of the transportation network for all road users.

Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

Poverty and unemployment are both concerns on the Lake Traverse Reservation. As previously referenced, the poverty rate is estimated at 40.8 percent and unemployment approximately 50 percent, compared to the State of South Dakota's unemployment rate of 2 percent. Given these statistics, and the vast area the Reservation encompasses, it is critical to economic vitality and competitiveness of the Reservation, especially in the rural housing districts, that every effort be made to ensure safe, reliable, consistent, and accessible transportation to services and opportunities that allow community members to become employed or maintain employment for long-term economic growth.

The Lake Traverse Reservation's economy is based primarily on agriculture and cattle grazing, which has long supported substantial numbers of Tribal members through fieldwork. By the 1980's, however, the Tribe had successfully established a manufacturing base on the Reservation, and by the early 1990's it had developed a casino gaming industry. The Tribe now owns three casinos with a portion of gaming funds used by the Tribal Road Maintenance program to take care of road clearing in the winter months on some non-federal roads and driveway clearing for rural, elderly, and disabled residents. Dakota Crossing is a grocery store owned and operated by the Tribe in Sisseton. In addition, the Tribe operates the Sisseton-Wahpeton College.

The Project will provide the needed capacity to increase Tribal Transit's efficiency which is imperative to maintain access to jobs, educational institutions, and essential services for historically disadvantaged communities throughout the reservation. This will also provide more support for local businesses, such as the local grocery store, small businesses in the community, and the casinos, through enhanced workforce mobility. Additionally, with completion of the Project, Road Maintenance staff will have faster and more efficient accessibility to maintenance/snow removal equipment and the supplies they need to provide uninterrupted transportation access and maintain the roadways during inclement weather, allowing **improved freight mobility** to deliver goods to local businesses and residents better access to the business services providing a **broader economic benefit** for local businesses.

The Project will **enhance the area's economic competitiveness** through the reduction of household expenditures on fuel and vehicle maintenance, with the increased access to transit services. According to the American Public Transportation Association, the average household spends 16

cents of every dollar on transportation, and ninety-three percent (93%) of this goes to buying, maintaining, and operating cars, the largest expenditure after housing. A household can save more than $13,000 by taking public transportation and living with one less car[7]. Offering a reliable option for transportation services provides a means for residents to reduce their household spending and better manage the cost of living in this disadvantaged rural community.

The ability for Tribal Transit to maintain vehicles as cost-effectively as possible, to house staff and transit files appropriately, and to welcome community members to a safe and accessible facility, is a critical piece of maintaining the transit system's ability to serve the community. Transportation funding, staff time, vehicle use, and vehicle miles essentially wasted on travel to and from remote locations for vehicle maintenance and repairs contributes to an inability to meet community needs and to use the service as intended to increase mobility, access to employment and educational services, and contribute to overall quality of life. Completion of the new facility will allow for the Road Maintenance and Tribal Transit to protect and care for vehicles more efficiently and effectively. This in turn increases service productivity, reduces the cost of doing business, and improves the connection of people to education and employment.

SWO DOT has been working toward adding staff to their Tribal Transit program to increase the availability of transit services, as well as bring on additional staff to provide surveying and construction monitoring services. The current facility arrangements have limited their capacity to do so. The Project will ensure the additional space needed to hire staff for the current and future growth of on-going operations.

With a high unemployment rate and location in a rural area of persistent poverty, **good-paying job creation** in the construction phase of the project will have significant short-term and probable long-term economic impact. In accordance with SWO Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO), a contractor must adopt the local hiring preferences, requiring preference to qualified Tribal members in hiring, promotions, and on-the-job training for all work performed on the project. Many of these hires have stayed employed with the construction companies long-term. The key to future long-term economic competitiveness on the Reservation is to strengthen the existing economic base and diversify the economy by supporting it with adequate transportation infrastructure.

The Project will provide wages that will meet the current Davis-Bacon or TERO minimum wages, whichever is higher. The Project will provide future long-term economic competitiveness on the Reservation and strengthen the existing economic base, diversifying the economy with adequate transportation facilities, transit services, and an efficient system that supports the overall wellbeing of Reservation transportation infrastructure.

State of Good Repair

In combination with mobility and connectivity, this Project most closely addresses State of Good Repair. The existing Road Maintenance building and the sand/salt storage area are in a state of significant disrepair and are no longer meeting the needs of transportation and transit staff or the public. The existing land and outbuildings were originally purchased in 1970 by SWO for storage space. In 1972 the Tribe established the buildings and surrounding acreage. In 1990, SWO built a

[7] Public Transportation Facts - American Public Transportation Association (apta.com)

new building for the Road Maintenance program. It is a pole frame building with metal siding, dirt floor, and single-family-residence-grade electricity and water service. Currently, it houses the Road Maintenance staff with DOT Administration and Tribal Transit staff at two different and separate locations.

Although regular maintenance has been done on the building, the age, original construction deficits, and heavy use have taken a toll, leaving the building in need of updated internal systems and significant repairs. Specifically, the building's heating and ventilation systems were installed with the original building (almost 35 years ago) and have never been re placed. This results in lack of heat in the winter and no air conditioning in the summer months except for window air conditioners. Systems are also not energy efficient, resulting in unnecessary environmental concerns.



Inside Area of Current Road Maintenance Facility

The current building has no formal staff offices, usable bathrooms, public waiting area or meeting space that can be utilized for cross-agency coordination or meetings with transit users or the public in general. The building is also not ADA compliant, lacking ADA accessible rest rooms and limited access due to non-ADA compliant doorways and walkways.

Transit vehicles and Tribal transportation road maintenance vehicles are currently stored outside existing facilities (and in two separate locations), where they are exposed to the elements and subject to potential vandalism/theft. South Dakota is known for extreme winters, with -45-degree windchills, and summers with days over 100 degrees, resulting in shorter useful-life expectancy for unprotected vehicles. In particularly heavy snow seasons, there is additional time and effort needed to remove snow from the vehicles to utilize them, and, in extreme temperatures, sometimes an inability to use them at all due to cold starts. Additionally, the existing facility does not have a vehicle maintenance area or appropriate maintenance facilities, resulting in transit vehicles being unable to be maintained internally.


Current Road Maintenance Facility

The new combined services facility will address all State of Good Repair issues. It will contain adequate space to meet all the program needs and will be ADA compliant. The designed space will include an ADA accessible public waiting area and restrooms, staff offices, conference room, parts storage, three drive-through 80-foot by 25-foot bays, a wash bay, a vehicle maintenance bay with vehicle lift, diesel fueling station, electric charging station, a geothermal heating system, public parking spaces, security cameras, lighting, and a covered salt/sand storage area that will serve all of the Lake Traverse Reservation.

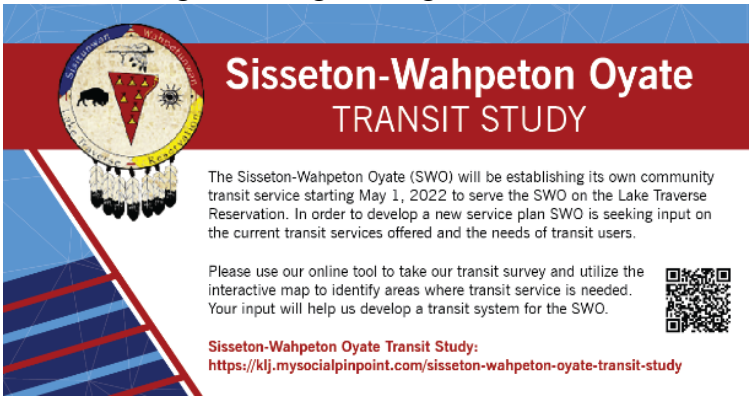


Rendering of New Transportation Facility

State of good repair will be addressed by improving transit facilities that are beyond their useful life and in need of restoration and modernization, which will reduce maintenance burdens.

Partnership and Collaboration

SWO has been proactive with its public engagement activities, understanding that community input and support will ensure long-term Project success. In 2022, the SWO started their initial planning for a Transportation Facility as part of the larger goal of operating a fully in-house transit service. Specific tasks included developing and **implementing a community engagement plan** to increase support and awareness of this facility and to **capture valuable input from the community** regarding desired outcomes. SWO conducted a Transit Study to determine the feasibility of developing an in-house transit program to serve the residents of the Lake Traverse Reservation and finalizing their long-term agreement with Community Transit. The goals as outlined in that study were to further establish purpose and need; address community concerns and incorporate, where possible, stakeholder and public input into the selection of the preliminary design. An online survey was sent out to the community in March 2022 and closed at the end of April 2022.



Additionally, SWO DOT engaged with Community Transit to study operational coordination efforts for the areas covering tribal related services areas of the two entities. Discussions between the SWO DOT and Community Transit involved the potential to coordinate drivers, dispatch upgrades and storage facilities in SWO related areas and the community of Sisseton, SD. A key feature of the discussions was the development of a tribal transportation coordinator position to manage transit needs in the SWO tribal areas. A series of meetings were held between the SWO DOT and Community Transit to outline a range of coordination opportunities. A general framework for coordination was discussed between the two entities for further discussion and evaluation as each entity moved forward with transit investments in the areas adjacent to and including the SWO tribal lands.

In June 2024, Tribal Transit completed a community engagement event as part of their preliminary engineering activities for the Project at the Tribes general council assembly. This 2-day event had high attendance totaling 683 on day 1 and 657 on day 2. Information was shared of Tribal Transit moving to a fixed local route for increased access for essential services for tribal residents. A survey was completed to gain further insight into transit services the community would like to see incorporated with Tribal Transit expanding services. Results concluded a need for increased local services as well as weekend trips to big-box retailers like Walmart for items that are either not available locally or have an increased cost in which the low-income residents could not afford. The closest Walmart is located in Watertown, SD, approximately 60 miles from Sisseton.

The Project is still undergoing preliminary engineering activities and additional public engagement will be completed through 2025. Through a **meaningful public engagement process**, SWO will continue to implement effective methods to share information, further explore needs and concerns, establish and strengthen relationships, and maintain dialogue with the tribal communities.

SWO works regularly in partnership with local, state, and federal agencies as part of project development. Partnerships include all Tribal Districts, Sisseton, the five counties in South Dakota, two counties in North Dakota, Indian Health Services (IHS), South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT), Community Transit, Inc., Sisseton-Wahpeton College, BIA, local law enforcement, and emergency services. These partnerships serve as an integral part of the Project as everyone sees the improvements to safety, mobility, quality of life, accessibility, and connectivity vital to the communities on the Lake Traverse Reservation.

Continued public engagement will include:

Targeted Outreach to SWO Tribal Council

To maintain open communication with Council. Project information will be shared at Tribal Council meetings to gather feedback, answer questions, and ensure Project goals are adhering to SWO's overall identified strategy.

Presenting at District Meetings

This has proven to be an effective and convenient way to share project information and gather public input and feedback.

Stakeholder Interviews and Meetings

These will be held throughout the duration of the Project to gather stakeholder needs and concerns, offer insight on how those will be addressed, and discuss the anticipated impacts through the construction process.

Letters of support have been received from SDDOT and South Dakota Representative Dusty Johnson. All support letters for the Project can be found at: https://inputcentral.com/swo2025build

With there being a lack of current EV charging infrastructure on the Lake Traverse Reservation, SWO Transportation has begun planning for how to accommodate the increased demand from local residents and travelers of the Reservation. SWO plans to work with Native Sun Community Power Development and Electric Nation to further build out charging stations within the reservation for both public and transit use. Through this partnership, Electric Sun will provide community outreach and education to tribal residents on the benefits and concerns of electric vehicles. They will also provide training to transit and maintenance staff on maintenance and upkeep of the electric transit vehicle as well as training and risk management with local emergency service personnel on how to handle emergency situations involving electric vehicles.

It is the Tribe's long-term goal to take over the BIA Road Maintenance Program through PL93-638 contracting. Many other Tribes have done the same to streamline and provide better DOT services, road maintenance and snow removal services throughout the Reservation. At that time, BIA staff, their equipment, and their funding would be incorporated into the space and operation of this new DOT facility.

Innovation

Innovative Technologies

The Project itself is transformational and innovative for this Tribal community. The new facility will **incorporate a geothermal heating/cooling system and radiant floor heat**. Geothermal heating and cooling technologies offer cost effective, efficient temperature control solutions for buildings, campuses, and even entire communities. Widespread adoption of these technologies helps to decarbonize the building and electricity sectors, reduce energy costs, stabilize the grid, and boost community resilience. According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, geothermal heat pumps can reduce energy consumption and emissions up to 44 percent compared to air-source heat pumps and 72 percent compared to standard air-conditioning equipment[8]. This will lower facility operation costs for the Tribe and create a more comfortable work environment within the maintenance and office areas. By using geothermal technology in the building, we used the Geothermal Cost Savings Calculator to determine the cost savings through reduced heating costs, savings of about $14,000 per year for a building comparable in size, or a savings of 51% over the cost of propane. Additionally, the use of geothermal heat pumps translates to an 80% lower use of fossil fuels.

Innovative Project Delivery

SWO plans to facilitate accelerated project delivery with the use of the **single contractor design build method**. The design-build method eliminates the need for multiple contracts and bidding stages and aims for better cost control through integrated planning. The selected contractor will act as the liaison between all parties, ensuring the project stays within budget and is completed according to the agreed-upon plans. This will also minimize risk for SWO during the construction process and ensure successful project delivery.

[8] https://www.energy.gov/eere/geothermal/geothermal-heating-cooling

Innovative Financing

Although this Project has been a priority project for several years, adequate funding to address the project in its entirety and/or in meaningful phases, has not been available. SWO receives annual TTP funding directly from the BIA Office of Self-Governance for planning, construction, and maintenance activities. Given that the Project is in an area of persistent poverty, is public transportation infrastructure, and is located on federal Tribal lands, private investment, TIFIA or RRIF loan funding is not practical. Congestion pricing and other demand management strategies are also impractical given the location and traffic counts related to the County, Reservation, or Project area.