Oglala Sioux Tribe

Department of Public Safety

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OSTDPS INDIAN HIGHWAY SAFETY PROGRAM

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August 2023

Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: BIA 33 Tribal Resiliency and Evacuation Route Improvement Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety Highway Safety Division, I am writing this letter in support of the Oglala Sioux Tribe's (OST) application for Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) grant funding for planning and construction of the BIA 33 Tribal Resiliency and Evacuation Route Improvement Project.

The BIA 33 corridor connects BIA 27 near the Badlands National Park to US 18 servicing the Tribal communities of Rockyford, Manderson, and Red Cloud and Tribal Districts of Porcupine, Wounded Knee, White Clay, and Wakpamni on the Reservation. This project will address critical transportation infrastructure issues, increase roadway resiliency, ensure public and emergency access to critical destinations, and strengthen and protect evacuation routes that are essential for providing and supporting evacuations caused by emergency events.

To truly understand how needed this project is, just recently, July 30, 2023, a severe storm passed through the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which brought heavy rains that triggered a culvert on the North Section of BIA 33 to fail and the road to collapse causing the road to be closed until a temporary culvert can be placed. This is a reoccurring issue in this area and directly aligns with what the PROTECT program is

trying to accomplish. The project will reconstruct the roadway, address drainage issues, increase the size of culverts to withstand the 100-year flood events that are currently happening every 3-4 years in the area, and provide a safe and reliable evacuation route for emergency events. These improvements will provide critical transportation benefits to Tribal communities and increase connectivity so residents have a better quality of life and safe access to goods and services, medical care, education, and employment.

We strongly support this community project and understand the importance of moving if forward. We ask for approval of federal funding to assist in the completion of the planning process to bring this project to life.

On behalf of the Oglala Sioux Tribal community, and those who travel through the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, I thank you for your consideration and look forward to seeing this project's successful completion.

Sincerely,



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