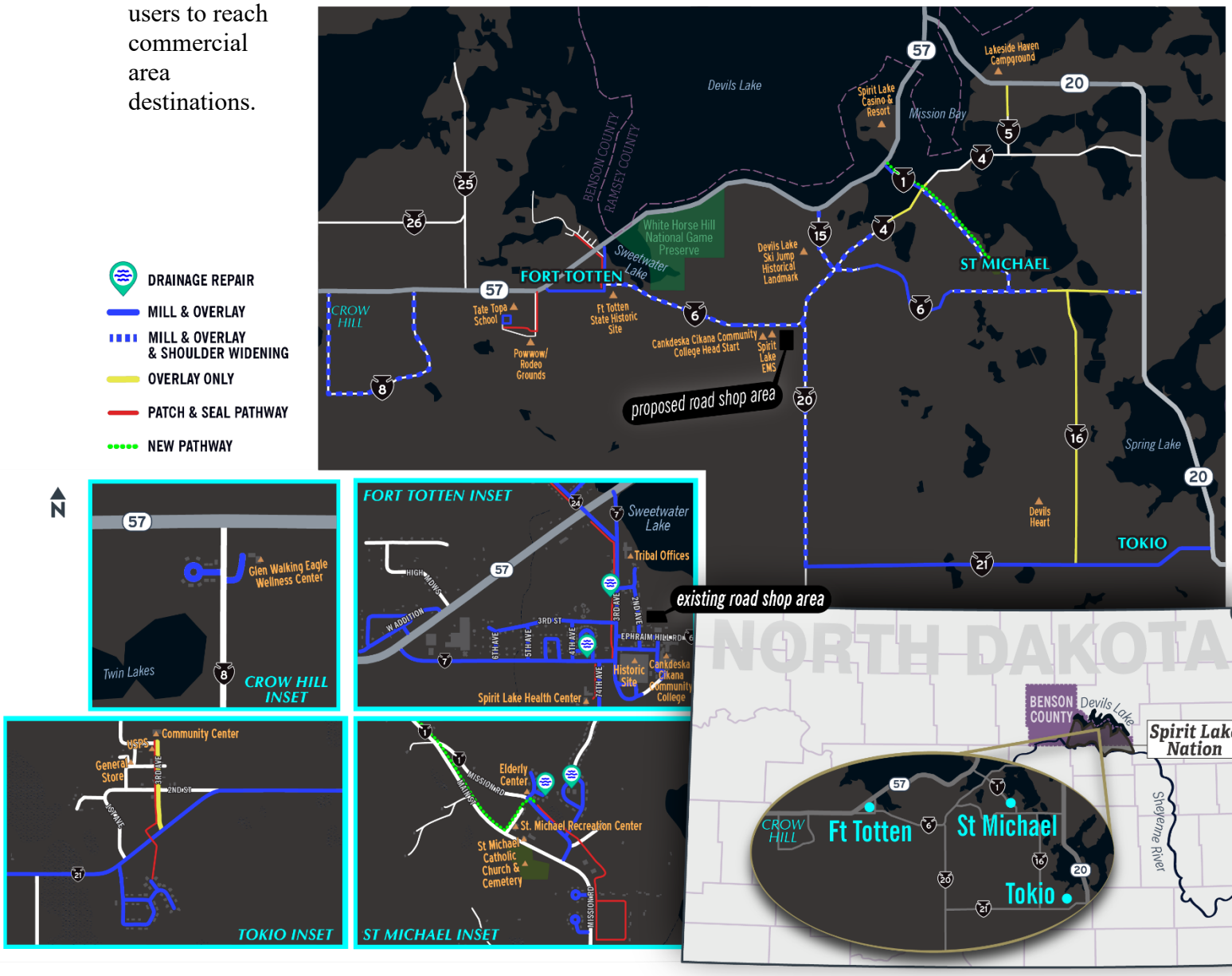
Merit Criteria

The Spirit Lake Tribal Community Repair and Rehabilitation Project addresses safety, mobility, connectivity, and accessibility challenges in Fort Totten located on the Spirit Lake Nation, a Historically Disadvantaged Community. The Project responds to existing and projected capacity, safety, mobility, and infrastructure issues by completing a comprehensive Reservation-wide project by rehabilitating approximately 41.7 miles of roadway pavement to include milling and overly of paved roadways, shoulder widening at designated sections, addressing known drainage issues, and completing reservation-wide 911 address mapping. Additionally, the Project will repair approximately 3.5 miles of existing multi-use pathways, upgrade pathways to ADA standards, install pedestrian crossings, construct a new pedestrian pathway and lighting where there currently is none, and design a Tribal Roads Shop to meet the current and future needs of Spirit Lake Nation. Project completion will result in improved safety to all vulnerable road users; incorporate multimodal traffic operations and access to businesses; replace aging infrastructure; and improve and expand pedestrian infrastructure throughout the Project area for active transportation users to reach commercial area destinations.



Improvements will ensure residents and businesses have a more livable community, enhance their quality of life, and active transportation will reduce fuel consumption and emissions.

Safety

The Project will address Reservation wide deficiencies to have the greatest impact tackling the safety concerns for all road users in this underserved community. The Project directly aligns with the Tribe's 2021 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the 2016 Tribal Transportation Safety Plan (TTSP). Fort Totten is the primary hub for Tribal government, education, jobs, and essential services on Spirit Lake Nation, which makes safe roadways and pedestrian accessibility throughout the community a necessity, but the Tribe identified additional project streets and pedestrian pathways throughout the Tribal communities that are also deteriorating and causing safety concerns that need to be addressed.

SLT is currently updating their TTSP, this is anticipated to be completed by June 2024. As a result, safety data was used from the most recent TTSP that was approved in 2016.

From 2008 to 2014, more than 328 traffic crashes were recorded on the Spirit Lake Nation that resulted in 26 fatalities. In an effort to reduce fatalities and injuries and improve the overall safety of the transportation system on the Spirit Lake Nation, a road safety audit was performed in September of 2012. This audit identified a number of strategies to reduce traffic crashes, including roadway infrastructure improvements, sharing crash data between the NDDOT/State of North Dakota and the Spirit Lake Nation, suggestion that the Spirit Lake Tribe adopt or reevaluate formal policies for approving new access points to roadways and to retrofit existing facilities so physical features are in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities ACT (ADA). Progress has been made, but there are still improvements to be done.

Public engagement meetings were conducted in developing the 2016 TTSP. The group identified a number of transportation safety issues based upon personal experience that are causing crashes, increasing crash severity or are otherwise creating transportation safety concerns in the local community. Some identified issues that will be addressed with the Project include:

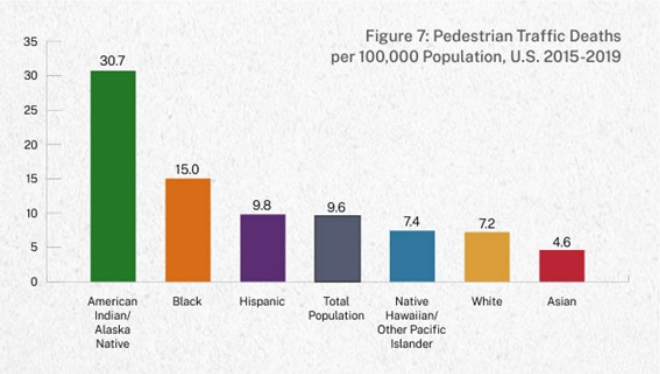
- Non-motorized road users walking on roadway especially in dark clothing
- Steep in slopes and lack of shoulder width
- People parking along roadways to swim or fish in the lake
- Lack of consistent street names and home addresses creating difficulties for Emergency responders

Additionally, there is a considerable amount of tourist and truck traffic that visits and passes through the Spirit Lake Nation each year. Large numbers of tourists are attracted for the Devils Run Car show, Spirit Lake Annual Powwow, and various fishing tournaments. The safety of the tribal transportation system is an important factor to the visitors and residents of the Spirit Lake Nation.



The existing corridor along BIA 1 from St. Michael to the ND Highway 57 intersection, adjacent to where the Spirit Lake Casino is located and many Tribal residents are employed, does not have adequate pedestrian access which creates a barrier for residents, particularly economically

disadvantaged, to employment opportunities without the use of a vehicle. A report completed by the Governors Highway Safety Association: An Analysis of Traffic Fatalities by Race and Ethnicity, published June 2021, states that American Indian/Alaskan Native populations had the highest per-capita rate of pedestrian traffic deaths of all races and ethnicities. A major contributor to this high pedestrian fatality rate is the result of arterial roads not being designed to accommodate pedestrians of which Tribes generally have a significant volume.



Lane Departures were a major cause of crashes on the Spirit Lake Nation. All the original BIA roads on the reservation have 6-inch edge lines and rumble strips in place, but there are many locations on BIA roads with no to minimal shoulder and steep inslopes. The shoulder widths along areas of BIA 1, 6, 8, 15, and 20 are insufficient. There is no room for drivers to maneuver to avoid crashes or have room to correct if the vehicle leaves the roadway. Adequate shoulder width is particularly important on higher speed roadways and areas where there is limited stopping distance. There is also limited room for emergency vehicles to safely pull over to address emergency situations or for safe storage for parked or disabled vehicles along these roadways. To address this safety issue the identified roadways will be designed to meet current highway safety standards and widened to incorporate 2-foot shoulders.

Currently, 911 address signs have not yet been installed on the Spirit Lake Nation. It has been recommended the Tribe's 2021 LRTP and the 2016 TTSP to install 911 address signs throughout the Spirit Lake Nation to aid in the proper documentation of incidents and the ability to find remote locations. The Project will include preparing 911 address and snow removal maps.

Addressing safety is one of the higher priorities for this project. Successful completion of the Project will mitigate systematic safety issues, protect non-motorized travelers, and reduce fatalities and serious injuries for both motorized and non-motorized travelers in a historically disadvantaged region.

Environmental Sustainability

The Project will support environmental sustainability and promote equity by providing significant benefits to transportation disadvantaged residents, including those with low-income, children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Benefits include more safe, secure, and accessible routes to opportunities for education, jobs, services, recreation and gathering locations within the community.

Environmental Sustainability benefits include:

- Reduction of air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and vehicle dependence by providing safe, separated pedestrian accessibility from housing to local employment opportunities in an underserved community
- Reduction of vehicle miles traveled by reducing the need of vehicular traffic for short distance trips
- A modal shift that reduces emissions with the expansion an active transportation network
- Improving the resilience of at-risk infrastructure
- Stormwater improvements to alleviate flooding of streets and tribal residences

Environmental Justice

Residents near the proposed project area are disproportionally exposed and vulnerable to environmental hazards. The USEPA's EJSCREEN mapping tool was used to identify environmental justice concerns near the project area. The results of the EJSCREEN tool demonstrates the following environmental justice indicators: https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/ The Project area EJ Screen Report can be found at: https://inputcentral.com/spiritlaketribe-raise.

INDICATORS	VALUE	STATE AVERAGE	PERCENTILE IN THE STATE
Demographic Index	76	21	98
People of Color	88	16	98
Low Income	65	26	96
Unemployment Rate	4	3	74

The proposed active transportation improvements will improve travel options and reduce vehicle miles traveled at this section of the corridor. The Project focuses to improve multimodal assets for pedestrians and bicyclists. As residents are provided with safe bicycle facilities and pedestrian friendly design elements, vehicle trips along the BIA 1 corridor will be diverted to walking or bicycling. The outcome will reduce emissions that cause global climate change and environmental damage.



Flooding in residential areas

Extreme weather has always posed a risk to the highway system and local roads. If the current trend continues and severe storms increase in frequency, the risk to the system, customers, and the Tribal community escalates. Risk to users increases in the form of safety aspects and travel time reliability. Detours around highway and structure closures from inundation and repairs can be significant. The damage to the Tribal roadways from severe storms can affect the system in two ways. Flooding can cause immediate damage and closures on the system, while increases in severe winter weather can cause a sharp increase in the deterioration rates of pavements and structures. This can have a significant impact on current conditions, projected conditions, and the sustainability of safe, reliable means of transportation.

According to the EPA's CREAT Climate Change Scenarios Projection Map[1], Benson County is anticipated to see an annual increase in average precipitation. Current predictions for the project area region indicate a change in annual precipitation between 1 percent to 7 percent by 2035 and between 1.7 percent and 13.7 percent by 2060. Additionally, there is an indication that the intensity of the 100-year storm event will impact rainfall and potential flooding scenarios moving forward, with a predicted change of up to 13.7 percent in 2035 and up to 26.6 percent intensity change by 2060.

The CDC refers to social vulnerability as a community's capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events ranging from natural disasters to human caused threats. The overall social vulnerability for the Project area is high[2]. Please see a complete CDC Social Vulnerability Index from 2020 for Benson County can be found at: https://inputcentral.com/spiritlaketribe-raise.

With storm disasters and flooding becoming more frequent and prevalent within the Reservation the impact will cause increased damage to an already vulnerable surface transportation system.

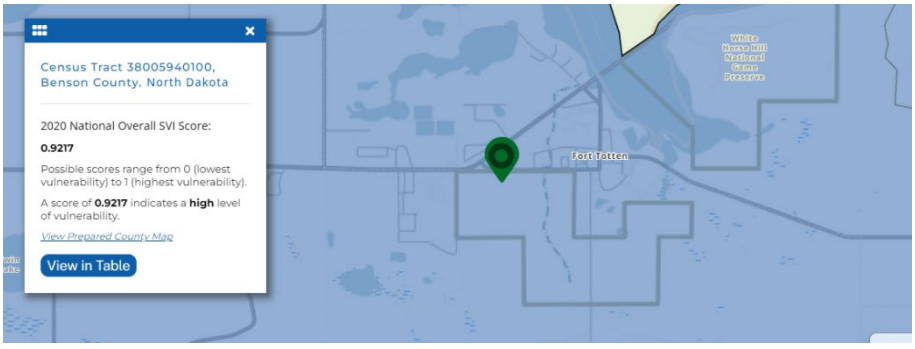
To improve the roadway and pathway resiliency within the Project limits, reconstruction will take place to areas that have experienced the most impact to ensure this infrastructure will maintain sustainability from any current and future weather and climate risks. Along with the roadway/pathway reconstruction, stormwater improvements will take place. Drainage has been a consistent issue in a number of areas and contribute to downstream flooding of tribal housing and streets. The area experienced significant flooding events in the summer of 2020 after a series of severe storms. Drainage improvements that will be addressed with the Project will help the community withstand future weather events and improve the resilience of the roadway infrastructure.

Within the last **10 years,** there have been **three Major Disaster Declarations** issued within the region of central Benson County, with other severe weather events impacting the Project area.

On **October 2, 2020,** the President declared a Major Disaster Declaration on Benson County due to severe storms and flooding during the period of June 29 to July 1, 2020.

On **July 12, 2017,** the President declared a Major Disaster Declaration on Benson County due to flooding during the period of March 23 to April 29, 2017.

On **August 19, 2014,** the President declared a Major Disaster Declaration on Benson County due to severe storms and flooding during the period of June 25 to July 1, 2014.



Upon completion, the Project will extend the useful life of the roadway/pathways, reduce risk from heavy rainfall, severe storms, flooding, and provide a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system by

[1] EPA CREAT Climate Change Map
[2] https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/interactive_map.html

reconstructing and improving the resilience of the roadway and allowing for continued access and operation during severe weather events and other natural disasters. While the Tribe is interested in, and actively pursuing nature-based solutions in cases in which they are appropriate and available, the anticipated mill and overly rehabilitation is tried and true approach as it pertains to transportation infrastructure and is a cost effective process to rejuvenate asphalt roads and provide a new, smooth road for the traveling public.

Fully understanding and then identifying nature-based solutions will be an essential part of the planning process. The Tribe hopes to incorporate these efforts into a comprehensive approach to safety, resilience, and accessibility planning for transportation and for emergency response. Based on previous transportation planning efforts, and initial discussion, the Tribe believes these solutions will be particularly applicable in addressing flood risk and adding or enhancing recreational/non-motorized transportation infrastructure and spaces that will limit or alleviate disruptions to the transportation network and minimalize or alleviate infrastructure vulnerabilities to extreme weather and related flooding due to climate change.

In December 2023, SLT's DOT maintenance facility was destroyed by a fire. Currently the staff are sharing space in the Sioux Manufacturing building and maintenance vehicles and equipment are sitting outside in the extreme North Dakota winter temperatures. To further address environmental sustainability with the Project, this newly designed facility will include indoor space for vehicles and equipment to warm up, reducing the amount of time the vehicles need to idle. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that vehicle idling results in about 1 billion gallons of excess fuel consumption each year. Additionally, the new facility design will include a covered sand-salt storage area. Salt and sand are currently stored out in the weather and will often times freeze and thaw and are subject to precipitation. If precipitation is allowed to come into contact with a salt or sand-salt pile, it dissolves the salt. The salt then moves with the runoff to brooks, wetlands, and ground water. Once in ground water, salt can affect drinking water and is nearly impossible to clean up. 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

According to 2022 Census data, 33.9 percent of Sprit Lake Nation residents live in poverty, with the community's median household income approximately 23 percent lower than that of the United States[3]. Currently, residents who rely on biking and walking must navigate deteriorated and ADA non-compliant facilities and crossings. More safe, secure, and intuitive walking and biking pathways will most significantly benefit disadvantaged residents by providing better access education, jobs, and daily living essentials.

The Project seeks to offer increased active transportation and future transit choices to citizens and those coming to Fort Totten from other areas of the reservation to shop or conduct business. The pedestrian infrastructure upgrades will improve access and remove barriers to employment centers, neighborhoods, and institutions including schools, healthcare facilities, essential community services, commerce, and recreational centers. The improvements will also promote a more active community, encouraging non-motorized travel. Promoting the use of non-motorized

[3] https://data.census.gov/profile/Spirit_Lake_Reservation,_ND?g=2500000US3935#income-and-poverty

travel can reduce the costs of roadway maintenance for this already fiscally constrained Tribal government, improve public health, proactively address equity, and reduce carbon emissions.

In April 2020, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) conducted a Walkability Assessment in Fort Totten for the Spirit Lake Nation. A community is considered walkable if it is easy as well as safe for pedestrians to walk for recreation, exercise, and to school, stores, parks, post office, etc. Additionally, a walkable community encourages safe use of existing infrastructure while expanding transportation options for users with varied ranges of mobility. The goal of the assessment was to bring all stakeholders together to identify the problems facing the community of Fort Totten when it comes to walking in the area. Note the assessment was completed during the Fall. The complete assessment can be found at: https://inputcentral.com/spiritlaketribe-raise.

The assessment team observed:



> *At several locations the sidewalk had deteriorated, leading to the substantial loss of the wearing course and allowing the subgrade to surface. In these locations, the sidewalk had the appearance of a gravel path. Such conditions, especially during wet weather, are not conducive to walking or running. The issue is particularly precarious for those using wheelchairs and strollers. At some locations, ramps connecting the sidewalk to the crosswalk were missing. They appear to have never been constructed. At several locations the sidewalk was icy, and in some places, puddles of water were on the sidewalk. The area under water appears to have been damaged/cracked. At other locations, most of the walking surface had weathered and weeds were seen growing where the sidewalk used to be.*

Based on the observations, assessment results, and participant comments, ATAC made the following recommendations.

> *Sections of the sidewalks that are in poor condition should be rebuilt to current standards. A review of maintenance practices should be completed. In addition to using plows, brushing of snow away from the walking surface should be considered. De-icing and traction improvement strategies should be instituted to maintain sidewalks and shared-use paths in safe walking conditions.*

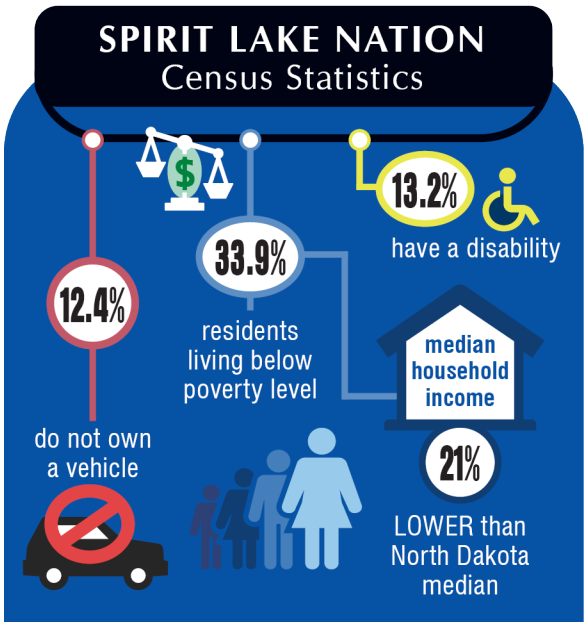


Providing increased pedestrian infrastructure by constructing a new separated pathway from St. Michael to ND Hwy 57 will reduce the burden of transportation costs for residents within the community. Residents will have the ability to safely walk or bike from their homes to employment opportunities without being vehicle dependent. This thus reduces the financial burden of residents to provide their own transportation in a historically disadvantaged community and area of persistent poverty. SLT is also requesting grant funding to purchase a skid loader with a snowblower, broom, and bucket for maintaining and clearing the current pathways based on the recommendation from the Fort Totten Walkability Assessment.

While all the Tribal communities and its visitors will benefit from these improvements, it is the community's transportation disadvantaged residents—the low-income, children, people with disabilities, and elders—for whom the project will provide the most dramatic quality of life improvements along with reduced fuel consumption and emissions. These residents will enjoy better access to essential services, jobs, recreation, and increased independence and transportation equity.



BIA 1 road deterioration and lack of pedestrian access



Mobility and Community Connectivity

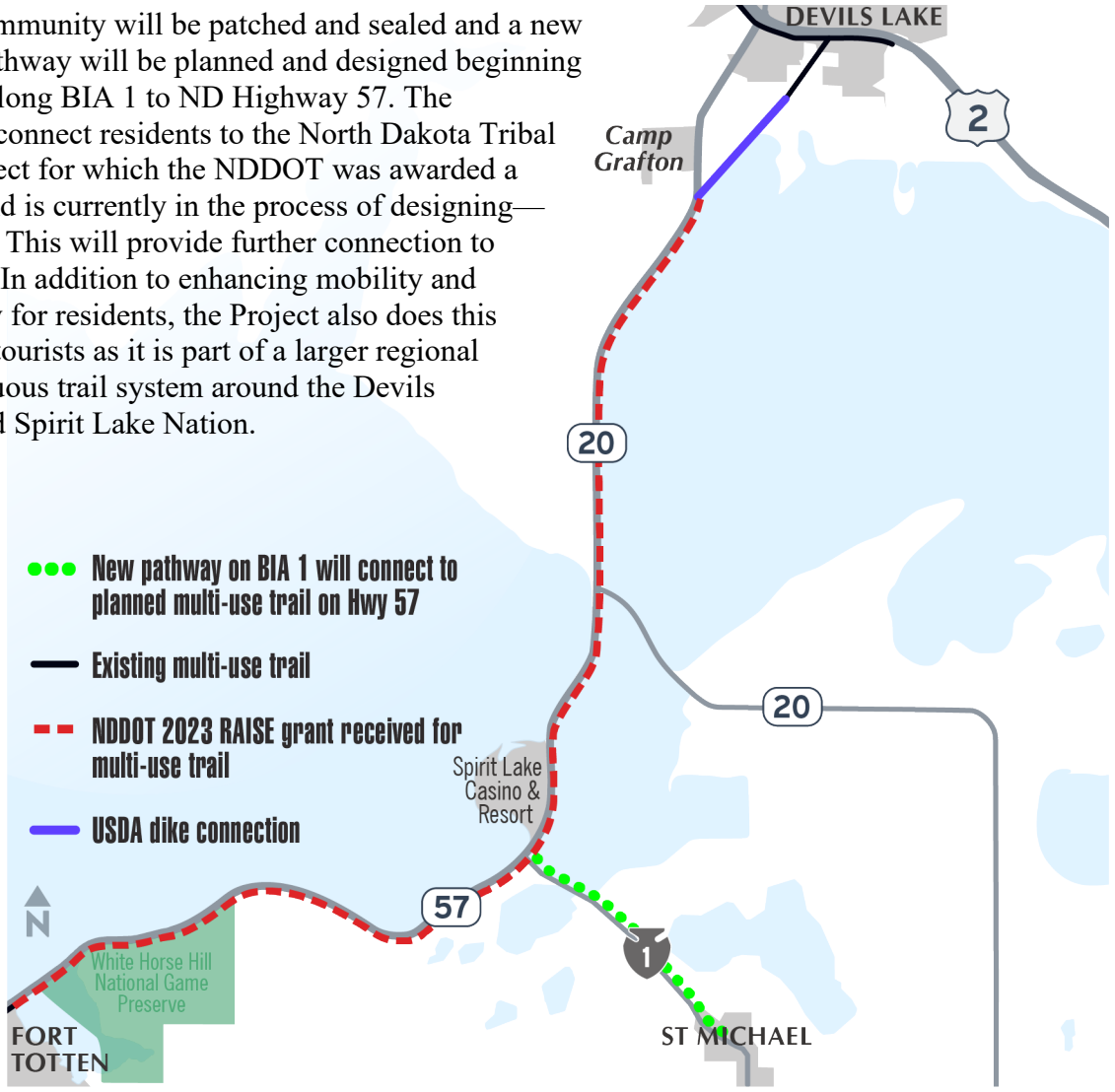
The Spirit Lake Nation, located in northeastern ND, is a predominantly rural area. Lack of connectivity and transportation access is a significant challenge and often inhibits the affordability and feasibility of securing and maintaining jobs on the Reservation. *The accompanying infographic* of 2022 Census data illustrates these challenges. Multimodal facilities directly impact the ability for Tribal members to access goods and services, medical care, education, and employment. The project will enhance walking and biking infrastructure and allow better access to transit to provide accessibility to employment, educational institutions, essential services, health care facilities, and community social services, contributing to opportunities for equity for the Tribal members and creating transportation connectivity within the community.

The Project area will encompass four communities on the Reservation, St. Michael, Tokio, Crow Hill, and Fort Totten, as well as the roadways that connect the communities to each other. Mobility and Connectivity challenges in each project segment are as follows:

The **Fort Totten** area is a centralized Tribal district consisting of residential homes, businesses, and essential services such as the grocery store, school, health center, Tribal Government services, churches, and recreation destinations. This area also includes culturally significant areas such as the Powwow grounds and the Fort Totten State Historic Site. This area of the project will include a patch and seal on pathway sections along 74th Ave to the Spirit Lake Health Center, along the Powwow/Rodeo Grounds area, and along 3rd Ave to Hwy 57. A mill and overly will be completed along main tribal roadways as well as housing areas. Areas of known drainage concerns will also be addressed.

The **St. Michael** area is primarily a residential area. The community is home to the St. Michael Recreation Center, Elder Center, and St. Michael church and cemetery. This area of the project will include a mill and overly of BIA 1 and Circle Drive through St. Michael as well as three housing areas. Two areas with known drainage issues will also be addressed. The current

pathway through the community will be patched and sealed and a new separated shared-use pathway will be planned and designed beginning at St. Michael and run along BIA 1 to ND Highway 57. The separated pathway will connect residents to the North Dakota Tribal Trails Connections project for which the NDDOT was awarded a RAISE grant in 2023 and is currently in the process of designing—*area shown on the map.* This will provide further connection to the city of Devils Lake. In addition to enhancing mobility and community connectivity for residents, the Project also does this for recreationalists and tourists as it is part of a larger regional effort to create a continuous trail system around the Devils Lake recreation area and Spirit Lake Nation.



The **Tokio** area is primarily a residential community. The Project will include planning and preconstruction activities to complete a patch and seal on the current pathway that provides access from the housing development south of BIA 21 to the Community Center. It will also include mill and overlay work on BIA 21 as well as the housing development area.

Separated pathway to Tokio Housing crossing BIA 21



The **Crow Hill** area is a housing community. The Project will include a mill and overly within the housing development and the tribal roadway to the Glen Walking Eagle Wellness Center. It will also include a mill and overlay and shoulder widening along BIA 8, that provides access to Hwy 57, the main route to Fort Totten.

Given that Spirit Lake Nation is largely comprised of low-income individuals with high unemployment, it is paramount that individuals have equal access to safe and dependable pathways and widened shoulder areas to provide accessibility to employment, educational institutions, essential services, health care facilities, and community social services. The Project will be transformative for both motorized and non-motorized travel, fostering connectivity,

accessibility, and increase mobility for all residents. It will remove physical barriers and address pedestrian gaps in the existing network by connecting the community to direct and affordable transportation options, especially for those in the tribal community who cannot afford travel costs or have no personal means of motorized travel.

Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

Infrastructure is the foundation for economic growth and prosperity, and on the Reservation, the need for infrastructure investment is evident. The lack of economic competitiveness across the Reservation is tied to lack of infrastructure including roads, telecommunications, water, and housing. The Spirit Lake Nation experiences economic barriers due to their extremely rural nature and lack of economic diversity, which are ultimately obstacles to the untapped workforce of the Spirit Lake Tribe. The project presents various ways to enhance the economic competitiveness of the area.

The median household income on Spirit Lake Nation is $57,500 (2022 ACS[4]), 21 percent lower than the median household income of North Dakota, $73,959. Development of robust and continuous facilities will bring expanded access to transit routes, walking and biking access, and a safe commute for all modes of transportation. This will connect users from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to living wage employment, especially for those who cannot afford travel costs or have no personal means of motorized travel. The Project will overcome transportation barriers in a Tribal community where the unemployment rate is considerably low at 1.7 percent, but still has 33.9 percent of residents living below the poverty level.

Fort Totten serves as the Tribal Headquarters for the 3,787 tribal members that live in the Spirit Lake Nation. The Project will improve transportation systems, increase travel reliability, and increase transportation options and system connectivity to revitalize the core of the community and better serve their disadvantaged community members. Rehabilitation and creating ADA accessible pedestrian pathways will not only provide increased mobility for the residents, but it will also help restore the economic vitality of the community by improving access to businesses, education, health care and community services.

In a region primarily reliant on agriculture, infrastructure improvements contributing to the movement of goods and services will have a far reaching, long-term benefit that positively impacts many users. Providing improved access to Hwy 57 and Hwy 20 will enhance the long-term efficiency of the movement of goods and services as the project roadways are designed to manage daily truck traffic efficiently and safely. The project will also allow the region to capture economic development resulting from tourism to Devils Lake recreation areas and campgrounds[5], White Horse Hill National Game Preserve[6], Spirit Lake Casino and Resort, Powwow and Rodeo grounds, and the many historical sites.



[4] https://data.census.gov/profile/Spirit_Lake_Reservation,_ND?g=2500000US3935#income-and-poverty
[5] https://www.ndtourism.com/cities/devils-lake
[6] https://www.fws.gov/refuge/white-horse-hill-national-game-preserve

Tourism is North Dakota's 3rd largest industry[7]. Visitor spending brings in $3 billion to North Dakota each year and is growing double digits on average across all counties. The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance's (NDNTA) mission is to protect, promote, preserve, and educate the world about the culture, history and environment of our sovereign nations. The NDNTA will promote and educate through sustainable tourism while developing economic opportunities for our people and nations. The Project aligns with directly with their vision by constructing a more pedestrian accessible community and upgrading the road and stormwater infrastructure.

The Project will have significant short-term and probable long-term economic impact, by providing construction training and employment through the SLT TERO. A contractor is required to give preference to qualified Tribal members in hiring, promotions, and on-the-job training for all work performed on the project. The tribally administered construction project can be used to provide education, training, and employment opportunities in the construction market. The wages for this project 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 and diversify the economy by supporting it with adequate transportation infrastructure.

Along with job creation on Spirit Lake Nation, the Project will connect the disadvantaged population with tangible ladders of opportunity and provide access to essential services, which currently can be a challenge due to the rural nature of the area and unsafe pedestrian conditions. The transportation improvements will diversify the modes of transportation to include safe walking and bicycling in addition to transit and vehicular transportation.

State of Good Repair

The Project consists of roadways and sidewalks that are either not designed to meet today's ADA standards or are in a state of disrepair. The biggest issue facing the Spirit Lake Road Department is that with current funding levels they do not have the ability to perform thin lift overlays or mill and overlay projects. The last time overlays were performed was 1998. Due to this, many of the roadways throughout the Reservation are in significant disrepair due to extreme weather conditions and lack of funding. The current state of repair makes it impossible to continue to maintain safe and accessible transportation infrastructure. According the 2021 SLT LRTP:

> *The Spirit Lake Road Department cannot maintain all the paved roads in top condition, which would currently require a mill and overlay type project, unless significantly more funding is found.*



Deterioration on BIA 21/35th St NE in Tokio

The existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the project streets and corridors have surpassed their useful life and are unsafe and unusable in many instances. The dilapidated roadway infrastructure has also surpassed its useful life, as evident in the cracking, rutting, depressions, potholes, and significant alligator cracking.

[7] https://www.nd.gov/innovation-industries/tourism



Pathway deterioration and lack of ADA accessibility

Infrastructure issues vary throughout the community, but all have similar needs. The Project will complete all planning and preconstruction activities to address the declining roadway infrastructure, drainage issues, shoulder widening, parking and driveway accessibility for residents, and provide ADA accessible shared use paths and improve pedestrian lighting.

North Dakota State University (NDSU) Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) conducts Roadway Performance Assessments[8] to evaluate the Pavement Quality Index (PQI) of selected roadways. A PQI score is developed for each segment which is measured 0-5 (Poor to Excellent). Roadways with a high PQI are free of potholes, cracks, and other pavement distresses that contribute to uncomfortable travel conditions. Roadways with a low PQI are distressed, have poor ride quality, and in need of rehabilitation or reconstruction. The *map below* shows the PQI results from the most recent assessment of the roadways within Project area.



The Spirit Lake Road Department has done an excellent job of enacting policies that have resulted the preservation of the condition of their major paved roads. The Road Department performs a chip seal project approximately every two years, with a third of their paved roads receiving a chip seal every two years. This results in all roadways receiving a chip seal at approximately six-year intervals. Sometimes, project funding is limited, and this cycle is extended by a year or more. The road department has also started performing depressed crack repair projects on some segments of roadway showing signs of deteriorating prior to chip sealing them. This is another way to preserve the existing condition of the paved system. Once the Project is fully constructed, these Tribal roadways will continue to be maintained to a state of good repair.

[8] https://dotsc.ugpti.ndsu.nodak.edu/GRIT/



Along with the roadway reconstruction, drainage improvements will take place. They are currently undersized, have had a history of collecting sediment, become silted in with sand due to storm water drainage issues, and contribute to flooding of tribal housing and streets. Evaluation of the current system will be done through the planning and design process to alleviate residential flooding as well as provide protection to the road infrastructure. When the objectives of the Project are achieved, SLT will have a properly planned and designed project that will improve its transportation assets and enhance the multimodal transportation network in this rural area.

On December 11, 2023, SLT's DOT maintenance facility was destroyed by fire. The SLT DOT maintenance division oversees the preservation, upkeep, inspection, evaluation and restoration of the Spirit Lake Reservation Tribal roads and rights of way. They also take care of snow removal and ice control, mowing, litter removal, and maintenance of drainage systems. Often times they are early responders assisting in clearing roads during storms for emergency services to safely pass or enact detour operations if necessary. Currently the staff are sharing space in the Sioux Manufacturing building and maintenance vehicles and equipment are sitting outside in the extreme North Dakota winter temperatures. SLT DOT maintenance staff will remain at this temporary space until a new facility can be constructed. The Tribe has trust land available that will provide a more centralized location for road maintenance services and is also located adjacent to the Spirit Lake EMS building. This location will provide for more efficient access during emergencies in inclement weather that may require a snowplow to clear roadways for the ambulance to get to a location.

The planning project will include complete design and preconstruction activities for a new Tribal Roads Shop to meet the current and future needs of Spirit Lake Nation. The maintenance shop will provide office space for staff, a safe space for vehicles to be stored inside, space for in-house maintenance on vehicles and equipment, resulting in significant cost savings, and a covered salt/sand storage area that will serve all of the Spirit Lake Reservation.



Tribal Trust land for new maintenance facility next to current EMS building

Partnership and Collaboration

Traditionally, underserved populations are not involved or engaged in most transportation decisions. SLT tribal member input and support of this project will ensure long-term project success. Since the project is in the planning phase, a formal public engagement plan has not been developed. As the project moves along, SLT will utilize tactics and community involvement techniques as outlined in the USDOT'S Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making Guide. Public outreach efforts will focus on reaching the

people to ensure equitable representation from the disadvantaged and underrepresentation populations in the community.

Through a meaningful public engagement process, Spirit Lake Roads will implement effective methods to share information, explore needs and concerns, establish and strengthen relationships, maintain dialogue with the tribal communities, and to assess and mitigate impacts throughout all stages of the transportation decision-making process.

SLT regularly works in partnership with local, state, and federal agencies as part of project development. Partnerships include Tribal Districts in Fort Totten, St. Michael, Crow Hill, Devils Lake, Ramsey County, Benson County, Indian Health Services (IHS), North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT), Spirit Lake Water Resource Management, Spirit Lake Public Transit, Four Winds Community Schools, Cankdeska Cikana Community College, BIA, local law enforcement, and emergency services. These partnerships serve as an integral part of the project as they see the improvements to safety, mobility, quality of life, accessibility, and connectivity vital to the community of Fort Totten and the entire Spirit Lake Nation. Letters of project support have been received from ND Governor Burgum, NDDOT, and others. All support letters for the Project can be found at: https://inputcentral.com/spiritlaketribe-raise.

The public including the residents of SLT and Fort Totten also are included as partners in this project. These enhancements directly affect the residents of this community and will greatly improve their quality of life and accessibility to essential services. As part of the recent Long-Range Transportation Plan update, the public provided comments and feedback on important issues to address. One of the critical issues included is the need for additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Fulfilling this need will be well received within the community but outreach will be essential as the project fully develops.

Purposed public engagement may include

TARGETED OUTREACH TO THE SLT TRIBAL COUNCIL: In an effort to keep 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 SLT's overall identified strategy.

PRESENTING AT DISTRICT MEETINGS AND POP-UP EVENTS: We want to meet the community where they are at, which means we will set up at events or locations that people already frequent. Contact cards will be provided and information for newsletters or other communication will be available.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND MEETINGS: Stakeholder meetings will be held throughout the Project to offer insights into the needs and concerns to be addressed and the anticipated impacts throughout the construction process.

VIRTUAL OUTREACH WITH AN INTERACTIVE PROJECT WEBSITE: An interactive project website will be available that will have all project materials and encourage ongoing public engagement through interactive maps, comment boards, surveys, and videos.

SLT recently held a Public Input Meeting for another project immediately preceding a General Assembly meeting (with all four Districts). We found that to be convenient for stakeholders and the public, and we plan to do that again for stakeholder meetings.

Innovation

The Project is transformative and innovative for this Tribal community. Through the planning and design process, innovative technologies, construction processes, and project delivery will be evaluated to incorporate into the final design plans. While the planning project does not specifically include an innovative technique, SLT is taking an innovative approach to meet the needs of its residents. Supporting this project with U.S. DOT RAISE funding will take a huge burden off the Tribe to financially support this project, leaving funding available to support other areas for this disadvantaged Tribe. This multi-faceted planning approach to the Project will have long-term cost and time savings, as it looks at improvements as a whole and not as issues to address individually. As other development occurs in the area, or the NDDOT incorporates updates to infrastructure on their maintained roadways, SLT will be able to support those projects and provide the residents of the Tribal community a safe transportation alternative that gives them access to the things they need.

The Project will seek to implement innovative technologies and equitable planning methods to provide cost savings and environmental sustainability. Innovative technologies utilized during the planning and design phase will include the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment for survey, environmental investigation, and photos, Drone video and photos, Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of environmentally sensitive locations, latest version of software which analyze hydrology and hydraulics, and the newest versions of highway design software which can develop corridor grading surfaces for use by construction equipment.

Mill and overlays of the existing asphalt will be milled, recycled, and reused in the new asphalt concrete pavement. LED pedestrian lighting will be included along the new separated pathway on BIA 1 to minimize energy consumption and utility costs to the tribe as they cover the cost of the utility for these lights. These improvements are all new technologies that will provide a great benefit to this historically disadvantaged community.

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. The Spirit Lake Tribe 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 is not practical nor applicable.