BENSON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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February 20, 2024

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

Subject: Spirit Lake Tribal Community Repair and Rehabilitation Planning Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of **Benson County,** I am writing this letter in support of the Spirit Lake Tribe's (SLT) application for Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant funding for planning of the Spirit Lake Tribal Community Repair and Rehabilitation Project.

Safe and accessible transportation is essential to the Spirit Lake Nation, a rural tribal community located in northeast North Dakota. The Spirit Lake Roads Department currently expends 50 percent of its annual Tribal Shares of Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) funds on road maintenance and the other half on preventive maintenance to patch and chip seal coat its paved roadways. This leaves essentially no TTP funds available for much needed road rehabilitation to address deteriorating roadways, shoulder widening to reduce roadway departure crashes, complete drainage improvements, or provide safe and accessible pedestrian facilities. Additionally, the Tribal Roads shop caught on fire December 11, 2023, making it completely unusable. The Spirit Lake Nation seeks to provide a transportation system that can safely and efficiently move people and goods and provide quality multimodal access to Tribal housing, services, and employment opportunities.

The project will complete all planning and preliminary engineering activities to reconstruct residential roads, address drainage issues, complete shoulder widening, provide ADA accessible sidewalks, improve pedestrian lighting, repair and construct pedestrian trails, and design a Tribal Roads Shop to meet the current and future needs of Spirit Lake Nation. Additionally, the Tribe plans to update 911 and snow removal address maps for emergency responders and evacuation planning and preparation. The project will significantly improve the safety and accessibility of the

transportation system within the community, provide opportunity for future economic and tourism development, and connect residents to schools, businesses, medical and essential services, and Tribal facilities.

On behalf of the Spirit Lake Tribal community, I thank you for your consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

Tammy Kuk, Chairwoman
Benson County Commission