Project Readiness

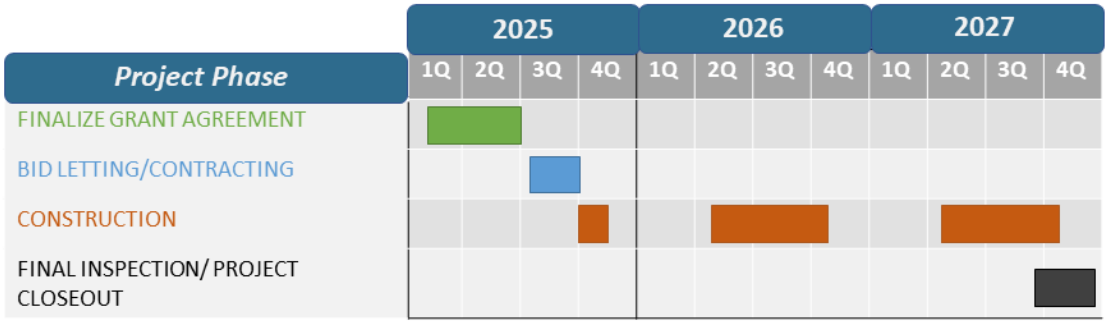
Environmental Risk Review

This project is positioned to begin construction in a timely manner (Q4 of 2025). This is based upon the proposed project schedule and the risk and mitigation strategies for the Project.

Project Schedule

The Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) has long identified the need for the Project, however, due to the significant investment required for project construction and the Tribe's extremely limited financial resources, reconstruction projects of this scale need to be supplemented with significant grant funding to come to fruition. OST Department of Transportation (DOT) began the initial preliminary engineering process for the Project in 2023 when it was added to Tribal Transportation Improvement Plan (TTIP). The planning and design work are 95 percent complete and environmental Categorical Exclusion checklist has been submitted to FHWA for review. The Project will be "shovel ready" in advance of Rural Grant funding awards. Assuming the grant agreement can be finalized in 2nd quarter of 2025, the Project will be bid and contracted in 3rd quarter of 2025. A construction start date is planned for October 2025 and work will be completed in two (2) construction seasons, due to South Dakota winter months, and fully completed in the fall/winter of 2027. The roadway will remain open for the duration of the project (one lane traffic during construction daylight hours and open to two-way traffic during hours of darkness). The overall timeline results in completion of the project, final inspection, and project closeout in Q4 of 2027.

Project Schedule



Required Approvals

All preliminary engineering has been completed. The Project aligns with the Tribe's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and is included in the Tribal Transportation Improvement Plan (TTIP). A Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) Environmental Checklist has been completed which includes analysis of potential impacts of the project for environmental, socioeconomic, and culture resources. The Categorical Exclusion has been submitted for approval to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) TTP Environmental Coordinator. Due to no Right-Of-Way action and no significant impacts, it is anticipated the Project will be approved for Categorical Exclusion. Following award and finalized grant agreement, the Plans, Specifications, and Cost Estimate Certification will be submitted to FHWA TTP and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) prior to construction bid letting. The NEPA documents and detailed cost estimate can be found on the Project Website.

Public Engagement
OST DOT updates the TTIP annually and holds public meetings for all projects listed in the draft TTIP. The Project was listed at the public meeting held in Pine Ridge, SD on March 5, 2024 no comments, concerns or objections were received. The Project aligns with the priorities of the LRTP. While drafting the LRTP the Tribe coordinated efforts with several key community stakeholders including emergency medical and Indian Health Services, South Dakota Department of Transportation, BIA, law enforcement, Department of Environmental Science, Economic Development and Tribal Transportation staff, all of whom had input into the ongoing planning and operations of the transportation program.

In December 2019, following the Tribal designation of Crazy Horse Scenic Byway (CHSB), OST DOT met with Tribal District Representatives and counties to solicit support for a proposal to the South Dakota Department of Transportation for state designation. The Project will support that proposal and is located along the Tribally designated Byway. Additionally, a Market Study was completed in 2022 to assess the market for enhancing existing or creating new amenities, programs, services, and partners for the Crazy Horse Scenic Byway. Public engagement included a visioning session, community meetings, interviews, a survey, and ongoing discussions with architectural, engineering, and financial consultants. The LRTP, TTIP, and CHSB Proposal to SDDOT can be found at the Project website.

Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies
Although all construction projects contain some risk, the Project is considered low-risk. The Project is currently being managed by OST DOT staff who will lead construction and liaison with contractors. As previously indicated, all environmental decision documents have been submitted and no significant environmental concerns were noted. All preliminary engineering has been completed, identifying, and mitigating any noted concerns that might otherwise arise had these steps not been taken. Costs are based on prior experience and project planning including preliminary engineering, design, ROW, and NEPA. If actual construction costs exceed the RURAL grant funding, OST will dedicate additional TTP funding to cover overruns. Bidding and contracting will take place in 3rd Quarter of 2025. Construction is planned to begin in 4th Quarter of 2025 to allow the contractor extra time over the winter shutdown to order materials and mitigate the risk of late or inaccessible materials.

The Project activities are in an area previously disturbed by road and utilities. It is unlikely a major environmental issue will arise. If an environmentally sensitive area is identified during construction, it will be avoided or mitigated depending on the oversight agency's request.

Technical Capacity Assessment
The OST DOT is the Lead Applicant for this Project. In 2007, the Oglala Sioux Tribe entered into an agreement with FHWA to become one of five initial Tribes to be a “direct-funded” transportation program at which point the OST DOT began to manage the planning and construction of BIA and Tribal transportation facilities within the Reservation. Unfortunately, the OST DOT inherited an under-funded, failing system. The OST DOT has made great improvements to the transportation infrastructure but there is still much improvement needed. OST DOT is committed to maintaining their infrastructure investments as they are critical to the Reservation’s economic competitiveness and quality of life. Successful administration of nearly

1,700 miles of BIA and Tribal roads, over 25 maintained bridges, and dozens of other major and ancillary asset types relies on sound investment strategies and management practices. They have successfully managed, stretched the funding received, and improved the surface transportation within the Reservation since 2007.

OST DOT has a long history of planning, designing, and delivering successful capital projects. This includes using TTP funds to advance initiatives. In the past five years OST DOT has expended an average of $7 million annually on transportation planning, construction, and maintenance. They have experience with grant reporting and annual reporting to the FHWA's TTP Reporting. They have consistently proven to be a good steward of Federal funding and is well-versed in the reporting requirements associated with federal grants. OST DOT has successfully administered TIGER, TTPSF, ERFO, Tribal Bridge Improvement Program, and other federal and state grant awards. The Project does not require any ROW acquisition and will comply with all Federal requirements including Buy America provisions, ADA regulations, Civil Rights requirements, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

OST DOT partners with a local engineering firm, on multi-year retainer contract. The engineering firm has worked with the OST DOT since 2007 and is very familiar with the procedures and processes for Federal TTP projects as well as grant funded projects. The engineering firm has assisted the OST DOT and other Tribes in federal grant agreements, schedules, budgets, construction contracts, and reporting.

Financial Completeness

The Project budget is current (2024) and has been calculated based on known variables for supplies, time, and labor and inflated by 3 percent per year to address anticipated year-of-construction actual costs. The budget contains adequate contingency to address any potential overruns, but if actual construction costs exceed the RURAL grant funding, OST will dedicate TTTP funds to cover any cost overruns beyond the grant receipts. Budget estimates were completed by a professional engineering firm based on extensive experience with similar projects in scope, location, and anticipated schedule for both planning and construction.