

Martin Harvier, President, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States
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Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Cook, members of the committee,

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee about the transportation issues impacting Indian tribes across the nation. My name is Martin Harvier, and I serve as the elected President of the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC), located in the metropolitan Phoenix area in Arizona.

By way of background, the final reservation boundaries of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community was established by an Executive Order of President Rutherford B. Hayes in June 1897 and is approximately 85 square miles.

Culturally, the Community is represented by two distinct tribes, the Pima (O'odham) and Maricopa (Peeposh) and we are the descendants of the Huhugam who had inhabited central and southern Arizona since time immemorial. Today, there are approximately 10,600 enrolled members of the Community.

Where the community was once on the outskirts of the Phoenix metropolitan area, today we are required to be an integral part of the burgeoning east valley of Phoenix. For example, the cities of Tempe, Scottsdale, and Mesa that border our community are some of the fastest growing cities in the state. In addition, nearly 9 miles of interstate freeway, the loop 101, is located within the Community.

The following statistics are illustrative of the myriad number of stakeholders that have a responsibility for roadways within the Community. These statistics are also illustrative of the complexity of working with governmental entities at all levels to address and solve transportation and infrastructure issues:

Roadways: 193.3 miles of roadways within the Community.

Ownership:

- SRPMIC – 44%
- Bureau of Indian Affairs – 33%
- Arizona Department of Transportation – 13%
- Maricopa County Department of Transportation – 4%

- City of Scottsdale – 4%

Road surface type (approximates):

- Paved: 143 miles
- Gravel: 26 miles
- Earth: 22 miles

U.S. Department of Interior (DOI)/Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funding for road maintenance:

- SRPMIC receives \$1,300 per mile per year from the Department of Interior to maintain BIA owned roads.
- BIA estimates the total maintenance need is \$10,000 per mile per year
- SRPMIC average annual maintenance is \$11,145 per mile per year.

Daily Traffic Data:

- Major Freeways within SRPMIC – 415,000
- Major roadways within SRPMIC – 225,000

Insufficient Federal Support for Road Construction and Maintenance

Mr. Chairman, as the statistics show, there is inadequate funding to meet the basic maintenance needs of our current roads, let alone the funding necessary to support a robust 21st century transportation system.

It is clear that current federal funding is insufficient to support the SRPMIC transportation program and must be supplemented by tribal funds, additional federal-aid grants, and other local partnerships.

For new projects, the picture is just as grim. The highest priority for our community is paving the 52 miles of dirt roads which serve our members. Based on current funding levels it will take approximately 59 years to pave these roads.

As a result, we believe an increase in funds for tribal transportation programs will help tribes establish, maintain and perpetuate tribal transportation programs. Tribes need the resources to interact and partner with the county and state level on transportation issues and projects of mutual interest. Tribes also need additional funds for personnel, programs and systems necessary to address the long-term tribal infrastructure planning, construction, maintenance and safety requirements for their respective communities.

Further, the Community would ask the Committee to consider providing additional set-asides in other federal transportation, highway safety and related programs, and reducing the local match requirement for competitive grants in order to ensure that federal funds are directed to Indian

country where the need for transportation infrastructure, transit and highway safety projects is so great.

Transportation Safety

Another challenge facing the Community and our transportation system is safety. While our connectivity with other jurisdictions facilitates economic development, it also creates unique negative impacts. Most notably, a significant number of vehicles use the Community's surface roads as an alternative to regional arteries. This "cut-through" traffic increases wear and tear on roads and, more importantly, these vehicles are more likely to speed and often fail to obey stated speed limitations.

As a result, the Community has made improving traffic and pedestrian safety a priority. In order to access funding from the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), the Salt River Police Department (SRPD) has taken steps to standardize crash data reporting, and sends that information to the State Department of Transportation, both of which make us somewhat unique among tribal governments. Despite these efforts, we still do not receive enough funding from this program to make basic improvements like street lighting and crosswalks.

The Tribal Transportation Safety Working Group has compiled a list of recommendations to help address the inequities in passenger and pedestrian safety on tribal lands. One recommendation is to develop a federal repository for vehicle safety information on tribal lands. I share the belief that this would improve the ability of Indian tribes to demonstrate the need for transportation safety funding and reduce under-reporting of safety statistics on tribal lands, and I urge the Committee to work with DOI and DOT to implement the changes.

Right-of-Way Acquisition Challenges

One additional emerging issue I would like to raise is the challenge of developing and improving roads on highly fractionalized tribal lands. According to the BIA, the Community is one of the most highly fractionated reservations in the country. As a result, tribal land can have dozens, and sometimes hundreds of ownership interests. For even the most meritorious project, such as a road to access newly constructed houses on community land, we must seek permission from each interested owner. Right of Way acquisition is very difficult due to BIA rules regarding compensation and signatures, and will continue to be an issue for the Community that will impact infrastructure development in the years to come.

Self-Governance

Mr. Chairman, as the Community has noted in previous congressional testimony as a matter of policy and practice we believe in Self-Governance. We fully endorse the philosophy of removing the federal bureaucracy from tribal and federal programs and allowing tribes to directly use federal funding in the most efficient manner to meet tribal needs. As a result, the Community has worked successfully to transition the administration of many essential government functions from BIA control to the responsibility of our Community. We are proud to say our experience with tribal self-governance compacting has been very successful and is a perfect example of the most efficient use of the federal dollars.

As such, our Community directly manages, maintains and builds most roads on our reservation through our existing Self-Governance compact. We've used the resources available to us to plan for our current and future transportation needs, and our Tribal Transportation Improvement Program is implementing a series of projects which will increase safety, decrease congestion, and improve road quality.

Additionally, I want to report some very positive news out of the Tribal Transportation Self Governance Working Group. As you may recall, this group was formed by the FAST Act and is charged with expanding tribal self-governance capacity into all USDOT programs. A negotiated rulemaking process is currently underway with the Department of Transportation. As of last month tribes and USDOT have reached consensus on many substantive issues and I expect the Department will be releasing a proposed regulation for comment in the coming weeks. It is a good proposal that is the product of hard work and negotiation, and I think it will be something that both Tribes and the Administration can be proud of.

Finally, I am very happy to report that the Salt River Indian Community was just recently selected to receive more than \$49 million from the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Project program. The grant will support the Pima Road Redevelopment and Expansion Project between the Community and the City of Scottsdale and will improve vehicle safety, decrease cut-through traffic, and expand opportunities for economic development along a major thoroughfare.

This transformational investment in our transportation will make a generational impact on the daily lives of our Community members, and I strongly urge the Committee to work with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to support the reauthorization of large scale grant programs that support projects like this on tribal land. While it is no substitute for the baseline and maintenance funding that can be used to support a greater number of Tribal Governments across the nation, this program should continue and should renew its focus on tribal lands.

Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Cook, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on these important issues.