NATIVE AMERICAN PEDESTRIAN SAFETY GUIDELINES



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Introduction

Active transport modes, especially walking and biking, play a significant role in many Native American communities due to traditional practices, lower vehicle ownership rates, healthy lifestyles goals and established travel patterns. Therefore, prioritizing pedestrian safety in high-traffic areas can yield substantial benefits, including injury prevention through improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes, as well as increased awareness of road safety. Investments in capital improvements, especially along culturally sensitive trails and paths, not only enhance accessibility and safety but also shows respect to native heritage. Such investments contribute to improved public health by promoting physical activity and supporting environmental sustainability through reduced emissions. Overall transportation costs are also reduced when people walk and bike. Addressing pedestrian needs comprehensively is vital to ensure that active transport remains a safe, viable, and culturally aligned option for all communities.

These guidelines should be read and applied along with:

- "Guideline Advisory Manual for Native American Pedestrian Safety Assessments"
- "Process Manual for Native American Pedestrian Safety Assessments"

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With Program Evaluation Representative(s) facilitating, the Tribal Nation Transportation Department Representative(s) can oversee planning, infrastructure, and coordination to provide effective strategic leadership across all National Roadway Safety Strategy objectives, ensuring alignment of stakeholder efforts and advocating for funding, policies, and resources. A clear objective with a goal of zero traffic fatalities would need to be communicated ensuring each stakeholder group understands the shared vision and their roles in achieving it. The program champion, as selected by the Tribal Nation's Transportation department, would promote a safety-first culture across all levels of industry, and community organizations and their daily practices/protocols.

The program champion would be responsible for fostering strong partnerships by identifying all relevant stakeholder groups. These may include federal, state, tribal, and local governments, private sector partners, advocacy groups, as well as community elders. Creation of interagency task forces or committees is recommended, as it would facilitate bringing stakeholders together regularly to share progress, challenges, and resources while encouraging diverse representation from all vulnerable populations, including rural residents, and historically underserved groups.

Program championship would require a clear vision, inter-agency coordination, and the ability to inspire and mobilize stakeholders across jurisdictions. By combining robust policies, effective resource management, community engagement, and continuous program evaluation, tribal leadership can ensure their nation's alignment with National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS) objectives while streamlining the necessary funding and support.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY FACILITIES SCAN TEAM

The multidisciplinary Facilities Scan Team would conduct comprehensive scans of selected areas of the transportation network with special emphasis on the pedestrian facilities and related infrastructure. The area could include community spaces like schools, health centers, elder centers and other pedestrian-trip generators. The goal is identification of high-risk areas from a pedestrian's perspective, including accessibility, connectivity, lighting, and other location specific traffic safety concerns.

The team would include at least one representative from the following:

1. Tribal Nation Transportation Department
2. Program Evaluation Team
3. Tribal Law Enforcement
4. Indian Health Services Representative(s)

A consulting representative contracted by the respective tribal nation may also be included in the scan team, if desired. Additionally, participation from the outset of these efforts from community elders, youth, and educators is highly recommended.





Native American Tribal councils can play a vital role in improving regional pedestrian safety by advocating for proven countermeasures that are tailored specifically to their communities' needs. Their collaboration with state and federal agencies can help secure funding all the while incorporating traditional knowledge and cultural values into infrastructure design. The council can provide vision to the community educators through campaigns and events, raising awareness about road safety practices for both pedestrians as well as drivers. The council can also help in collecting data points for underreported incidents, especially through community participation on pedestrian related projects. By integrating cultural significance into pedestrian safety initiatives and effectively collaborating with external stakeholders and assessors, tribal councils can create safer, more inclusive environments for pedestrians while preserving their Native heritage in any given region.

HEALTH/EDUCATION



The Indian Health Services (IHS) can significantly contribute to improving pedestrian safety by addressing it through advocacy, data-driven initiatives, community education, and interdepartmental partnerships. Recognizing pedestrian safety as one of the key determinants of public health, the IHS can develop and implement culturally sensitive, unique education campaigns emphasizing the importance of pedestrian safety. These campaigns can also focus on the broader health benefits of active transportation, such as better physical fitness and reduced risk of chronic diseases and comorbidities like obesity, diabetes, and hypertension.

The Indian Health Services can play a pivotal role in building partnerships with external agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), County Health Districts, and respective state departments of transportation. These partnerships can be used to secure relevant grants in addition to technical assistance for highway as well as pedestrian safety projects. With these collaborations, they can help organize workshops and pedestrian safety-related booths at community. By integrating their health and wellness expertise along with community-based strategies, the IHS can drive impactful changes that make pedestrian travel sustainable for their communities.

In addition to advocacy and partnership-building, IHS can work closely with their K-12 educators, especially with rural populations, playing a pivotal life-changing role in improving pedestrian safety by educating students, engaging school-age families, and collaborating with community stakeholders to foster a culture of safety. The K-12 educators can help integrate pedestrian safety lessons into their curriculum, teaching students essential life skills such as understanding traffic signals, recognizing safe crossing points, and practicing situational awareness when walking or riding bikes. Educators can also create special events to encourage their students and families to practice safe routes together, reinforcing good habits and promoting active transportation.

In rural regions, where infrastructure may be limited, educators can advocate for safety improvements by collaborating with tribal councils, local governments, and other existing coalitions and advocacy groups. They can involve students in identifying unsafe walking and biking locations around their schools, homes, and communities, while encouraging them to participate in data-driven projects with activities like creating maps or designing safety campaigns related to pedestrian safety.

Additionally, K-12 schools can host culturally relevant workshops and traditional storytelling-based safety events that engage parents as well as caregivers, ensuring families understand the importance of pedestrian safety and empowering them to reinforce these practices at home. Educating families can effectively improve pedestrian safety, and foster healthier, safer environments for students, their families, and the entire community.

LAW ENFORCEMENT



Tribal law enforcement agencies can play a vital role in improving pedestrian safety by combining enforcement of laws with educational outreach to promote safe practices among drivers as well as pedestrians. By conducting targeted patrols in identified high-risk areas, such as school zones, around community centers, and busy intersections, law enforcement and community officers can ensure compliance with traffic laws, including speed limits, impaired driving restrictions, and pedestrian right-of-way rules. With the help of the latest technology like speed radars or traffic cameras, unsafe behaviors can be further deterred, keeping in mind that enforcement is strengthened by consistent application of penalties, such as fines etc., sending a clear message about the importance of following traffic laws.

Community programs such as School Resource Officers (SROs) are particularly valuable in this effort. Such trust-building programs help bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community. SROs, in their collaboration with K-12 educators, can provide safety education tailored to their own student population, teaching traffic rules, pedestrian awareness, and the dangers of unsafe behaviors such as distracted or impaired driving. By organizing hands-on activities like mock traffic scenarios, SROs can make pedestrian safety related learning engaging and practical thereby fostering positive relationships between the community and its own law enforcement agencies.

In addition, Tribal law enforcement can collaborate with other stakeholders to launch broader community awareness campaigns. These local campaigns can focus on distributing culturally relevant educational materials, reflective gear, and other safety resources which resonates with the participants. Hosting events such as safety fairs or walk-to-school or bike-to-school days on appropriately designated days can further reinforce safe practices and build community cohesion.

In addition to partnering with other regional/state law enforcement agencies, to maximize impact, Tribal law enforcement must partner with external organizations, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), to successfully secure grants and technical assistance for traffic safety programs, further cementing trust and engagement within their communities.

ROADWAY MANAGEMENT/ENGINEERING



Both highway design and traffic engineering play crucial roles in reducing pedestrian and bicycle crashes. Native American nations' traffic engineering specialists, including any contracted/subcontracted entities, along with local colleagues from nearby jurisdictions, should adhere to national and regional/local guidelines for designing safe pedestrian and bike facilities. All current, as well as future transportation projects, should focus on federal regulations on accessibility when it comes to pedestrian-related projects. Key components to be considered include:

1. **Uniform Traffic Control Devices**: Uniform installation of pedestrian, bicycle, and school bus zone signals, signs, and markings to help in better guidance and protection for non-motorized vulnerable road users.
2. **Parking Regulations**: Proper design, management, implementation, and enforcement of parking regulations to eliminate obstacles in pedestrian and bike paths ensures safe movement.
3. **Traffic-Calming Measures**: Techniques like road design adjustments (e.g., narrowing lanes, speed bumps, complete street design elements) slow traffic, guide road users to their dedicated spaces, thereby reducing risk for pedestrians and cyclists.
4. **On-Road and Off-Road Facilities**: These include dedicated sidewalks, designated bike lanes, paved shoulders, signed routes, and off-road bike paths and trails (such as those for snowmobiles), which provide safe spaces for pedestrians and cyclists to interact with motorized traffic.
5. **Sidewalk and Pedestrian Facility Design**: Engineering improvements such as wide-enough sidewalks, easily discernible crosswalks, well designed curb ramps, and well lit, inviting paths ensure accessibility and greatly reduce crash risks for pedestrians.
6. **Accommodations for Disabilities**: Facilities must be designed to be inclusive, catering to people with not only physical but also visual disabilities through accessible routes and intuitive infrastructure.

Any Native American nations' street maintenance personnel, along with their regional cohorts, play an essential role in ensuring that the existing facilities are kept in a state of good repair and upkeep, thereby preserving the investment, and guaranteeing the longevity of the public infrastructure. In addition, utilizing transportation asset management/monitoring, adopting performance-centered policies, and creating objectives built on quality data would support efficient management and analysis of ongoing funding decisions and their impacts.



Program evaluation specialists can play a crucial role in assessing pedestrian safety initiatives within the framework of the National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS) objectives by providing data-driven insights. These insights help program evaluation specialists in ensuring that pedestrian safety initiatives not only align with NRSS objectives but also achieve tangible, lasting improvements in safety for all roadway users. This expertise enables systematic evaluation of previous as well as current programs, identification of gaps, and measures of progress toward achieving safety goals such as zero traffic fatalities on the Native American transportation network.

Clear metrics and indicators can be established that reflect the Native American Nation's priorities, such as reducing pedestrian fatalities and injuries, improving infrastructure, and enhancing equitable access to safe transportation. Using mixed-methods research approaches that combine quantitative data analysis with qualitative feedback from community members, law enforcement, and other stakeholders, the evaluators can not only conduct baseline assessments to understand the current state of pedestrian safety, but also assess the effectiveness of any specific countermeasures.

Other considerations include equity to ensure that resources are reaching communities disproportionately affected by unsafe road conditions or driver behavior. Recommendations may include adjustments to existing programs based on findings, such as reallocating funding, refining safety education campaigns, or strategically targeting infrastructure improvements in critical areas. Such continuous evaluation supports constant improvement, accountability, and the effective use of resources in the pursuit of safer communities.



To create a sustainable pedestrian safety initiative, the Tribal Council's pedestrian safety-oriented efforts and oversight must encompass structured planning, stakeholder collaboration, data-driven evaluation, and community outreach. In that, roles and responsibilities, such as a specific position (or department) within the council should be designated to manage these efforts, ensuring accountability and streamlined as well as centralized operations. For example, a Pedestrian Safety Leader can be appointed to coordinate tasks, and serve as the primary contact for stakeholders. The personnel in this position must have not only the related education and experience but also the drive and passion for pedestrian safety to be able to effectively guide the overall strategy and the ability to inform critical decisions. This leader should then form a Core Stakeholder Action Team bringing together representatives from key sectors such as education, healthcare, and roads, along with members of tribal council and the rest of the community. This multidisciplinary team will be responsible for a holistic and localized approach to pedestrian safety.

This initiative emphasizes ongoing action as well as periodic evaluation to maintain momentum and to ensure effectiveness of any completed actions. Continuously collected and maintained data, such as formal as well as informal traffic reports and crash rates, alongside other available resources, should be utilized to inform strategies and track progress. Pedestrian safety must also be a recurring topic on any annual Tribal Council agenda, allowing for regular updates as well as sought input on active/future projects, planned outreach efforts, and to identify any needs as and when they may arise. To ensure effective long-term planning, perhaps a formal five-year multidisciplinary micro-plan can be developed, assessing progress, resource needs, and potential gaps in achieving the initiative's goals.

Furthermore, to enhance communications and visibility, the effort must include public awareness campaigns and community engagement activities. For example, at the end of the school year prior to expected peak in outdoor activities, pedestrian safety tips and statistics can be highlighted through local news, social media, social gatherings, among other channels to keep the topic relevant. Some kind of school-based and student-focused yearly competitions can be organized to involve younger generations in spreading awareness creatively while molding impressionable minds into safe road users. Other activities, for example, an annual community 1k/5k/10k walk/run can be held, fostering solidarity across generations and raising awareness about pedestrian safety among tribal members.