

**5311(c) Tribal Transit Funding:  
Assessing Impacts and Determining Future Program Needs**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The federal government has invested a significant amount of money in tribal transit in recent years. Since the enactment of the current highway bill (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)) in 2005, the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) 5311(c) tribal transit program has distributed \$60 million to federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native villages in rural areas. The money has been used to plan, start, and enhance local transit services. In 2009, an additional \$17 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus money was granted to tribes and Alaska Native villages to finance transit-related capital improvement projects.

The growth in tribal transit services was exponential during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), only 18 of the nation's 564 federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native villages received transit funding from the FTA in 1999. Conversely, a review of related Federal Register notices indicates that 101 tribes and Alaska Native villages received 5311(c) start-up and service enhancement grants between 2006 and 2010. Nearly 60 additional grants were awarded to conduct tribal transit planning studies.

Despite this significant increase in federal spending on tribal transit, the National Congress of American Indians and the Intertribal Transportation Association's Joint Task Force on Tribal Transportation has urged Congress to increase funding for the tribal transit program even further. The task force has called for future appropriations starting at \$35 million per year with subsequent increases of \$10 million per year until a funding level of \$85 million is reached. At a minimum, the task force advocated future funding at no less than the current \$15 million per year.

The continuation of the tribal transit program and related funding levels will obviously be a point of discussion when Congress deliberates the next federal highway bill. This study is intended to provide information on the program's impacts and accomplishments and will hopefully aide policymakers when they discuss the merits of the program and future funding levels.

This report draws on prior and ongoing research regarding the transportation needs of Native American and Alaska Native communities. It also presents information on existing tribal transit services, much of which was collected via a survey of the entities that have received 5311(c) tribal transit funding to either start or enhance transit services on reservations or in Alaska Native villages.



## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC NEED INDICATORS AND EXISTING TRIBAL TRANSIT SERVICES

Most Indian reservations and Alaska Native villages are, by definition, rural. Only 10 of the reservations in the lower 48 states are located in metropolitan areas and none of the 229 federally recognized Alaska Native villages are urban.

Despite this commonality, reservations are quite diverse in terms of their geographic size and population. For example, 106 of the 332 reservations in the lower 48 states have a land area of less than one square mile. On the other extreme, 24 reservations cover more than 1,500 square miles.

Of the 101 tribal entities that have received 5311(c) start-up and/or enhancement grants, 14 have land areas of less than 10 square miles but 22 cover over 1,000 square miles. With several grantees having land areas in excess of 5,000 square miles, the average geographic size of all grantees is 1,120 square miles. Therefore, the average grantee often has a single transit system that serves a land area equal to nearly 75% of the state of Rhode Island.

Concerning population, the 2000 census indicated that only 36 reservations in the lower 48 states had more than 10,000 residents; 256 had fewer than 5,000 residents. Seventy-four reservations had fewer than 10 residents per square mile and 42 of these had fewer than 5 residents per square mile. Many reservations, especially in the Upper Great Plains and southwest regions of the country, are also very remote relative to the nearest regional center, thereby making access to medical services, shopping, employment, and educational opportunities difficult. One-way trips of 50 to 100 miles or more are not unusual. These occurrences make the provision of transit services especially challenging.

The 101 entities that received 5311(c) start-up and/or enhancement grants have an average population density of 15.5 people per square mile, about 21% less than the national average for non-metropolitan areas. Note, however, that nearly 25% of these grantees have population densities of less than six per square mile and may, therefore, be considered extremely rural/frontier. Again, this occurrence makes the provision of transit services challenging and often results in higher than average per trip and per passenger operating costs.

In addition to low population densities and remoteness, there are several demographic indicators that suggest that the provision of transit services should be a high priority on many reservations. Mobility-dependent segments of the population typically include senior citizens, low-income individuals, disabled individuals, school-age youth, and people living in households without automobiles. A 2007 SURTC report entitled *Tribal Transit Demographic Need Indicators* analyzed 2000 census data for the 180 rural reservations that had at least 500 residents. That report identified 31 reservations where at least 20% of the residents were 60 years of age or older. Nationally, 16.3% of the population is 60 years old or older.

With regard to disabled residents, SURTC's 2007 report suggested that reservations are not significantly dissimilar from the national average of 7.7%. In fact, only 13 reservations had disabled populations in excess of 8%.

However, vast discrepancies were observed regarding low-income populations. While census data indicates that 12.2% of all households in the country were considered low income, a 2008 report by the Housing Assistance Council estimated that 32.2% of Native Americans on reservations live in poverty. In 2000, there were 27 reservations with 500 or more residents where low-income households accounted for between 37% and 55% of the population.

SURTC's 2007 report observed similar disparities regarding school-age youth. Nationally, 20.4% of all residents were between the ages of 5 and 19. There were 33 reservations where youth accounted for between 33% and 38% of the population.

Census data is also available concerning households that do not have an automobile. SURTC's 2007 report indicated that 10.3% of the nation's households did not own an automobile. Conversely, there were 28 reservations where between 15% and 30% of the households did not have an automobile. Unfortunately, while urban dwellers without automobiles have other mobility options, their counterparts on reservations often do not.

Concerning automobile use, residents in counties with high Native American populations tend to spend considerably more per year on automobile fuel than their counterparts in other parts of the country. A 2008 SURTC report, *Assessing Impacts of Rising Fuel Prices on Rural Native Americans*, found that there are 29 rural counties in the United States where at least 25% of all residents are Native Americans. Households in these counties spent an estimated 14.8% of their annual income on fuel, compared to a national average of 7.8%. While fuel prices on reservations are not significantly different from national averages, longer travel distances and lower annual incomes result in a considerably higher percentage of annual incomes being spent on fuel. As is the case with automobile ownership, many reservation and Alaska Native village residents do not have a transit option available to them to counteract high expenditures for fuel.

Table 2.1 presents a summary of the mobility need indicators discussed in the preceding paragraphs. As these discussions and Table 2.1 illustrate, many Native reservations have a relatively high percentage of mobility-dependent residents and the transportation needs of these individuals are exacerbated by the fact that many reservations are extremely remote, with the closest sources of medical services, shopping, and employment opportunities being 50 to 100 miles away. The need for transit services is often high. Unfortunately, the remoteness of many reservations and Alaska Native villages makes providing transit services both difficult and costly, especially given extremely low population densities.

**Table 2.1** Mobility Need Indicators

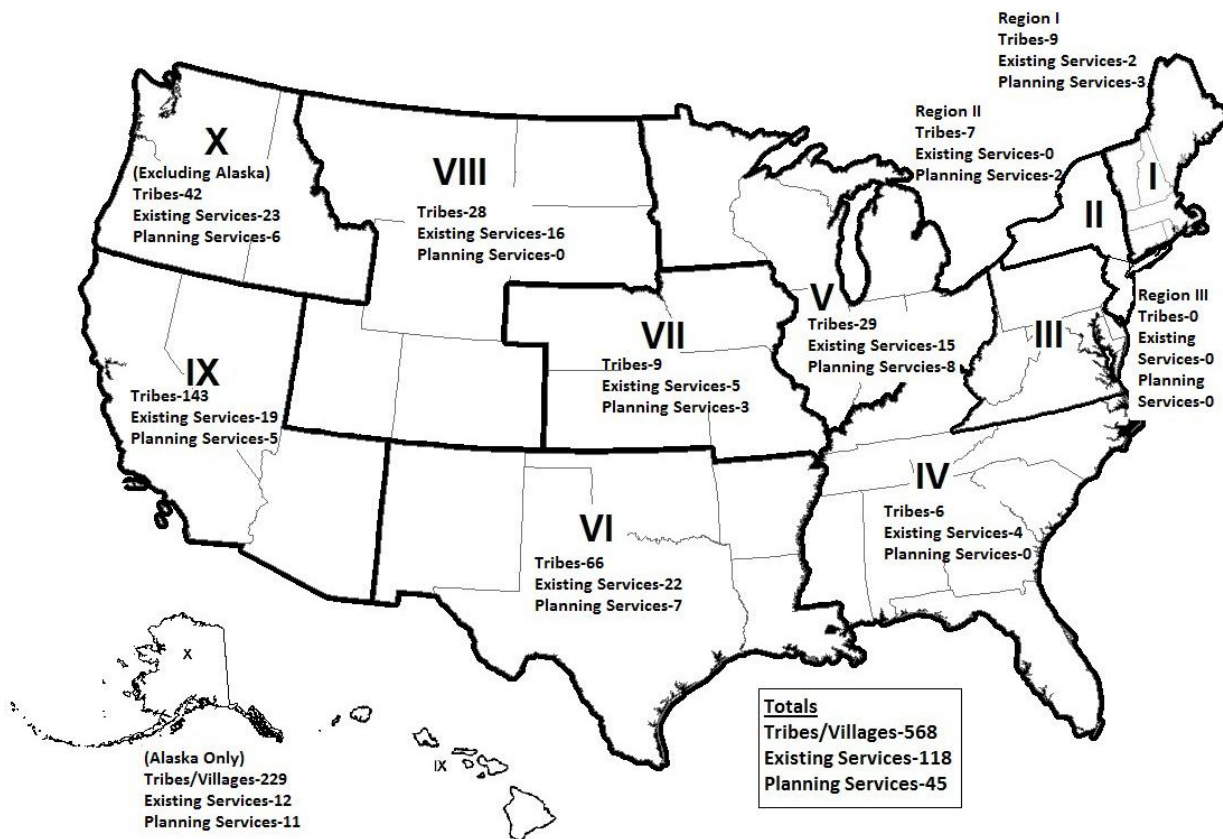
<b>Need Indicator</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>National Average</b>	<b>Tribal Finding</b>
Age 60+	Percent of population age 60 & over	16.3%	31 reservations at 16.3% or higher
Youth	Percent of population age 5-19	20.4%	33 reservations at 33-38%
Disabilities	Percent of population with a disability	7.7%	No significant difference
Income	Percent of population considered low income	12.2%	33.2%
No vehicle	Percent of population with no vehicle in household	10.3%	28 reservations at 15-30%
Spent on fuel	Percent of annual income spent on fuel	7.8%	29 Native counties at 14.8%
Population density	Residents per square mile	19.6 residents per square mile in non-urban areas	101 5311(c) recipients average 15.5 residents per square mile
Remoteness	Frontier designation		22 5311(c) recipients have fewer than 6 residents per square mile, many of which are located 50-100 miles from a major service center



As indicated in the Introduction, only 18 tribal transit systems were receiving FTA funding in 1999. Conversely, a June 2009 interim report of the Transportation Research Board’s (TRB) ongoing *TCRP Project H-38: Developing, Enhancing, and Sustaining Tribal Transit Services* study identified 112 existing tribal transit services across the country, plus an additional 49 tribes that were in the planning stage regarding the provision of local transit services. There has, therefore, been a significant response to many of the mobility need indicators summarized in Table 2.1.

Figure 2.1 presents a pictorial of the FTA’s 10 regions, the number of tribes in each region, and the number of existing and planned transit operations in each region, as identified in TCRP Project H-38. The number of tribes in each FTA region is based on the tribes listed in the October 1, 2010, Federal Register mentioned earlier. Some variations among regions may result because some tribes straddle state and regional boundaries.

The number of existing and planned tribal transit services in each region is gleaned from the TRB reported mentioned above. The number of existing services identified by the TRB is adjusted to reflect FY 2009 and 2010 start-up grants announced by the FTA in Federal Registers of December 31, 2009, and March 2, 2011. Those Federal Register notices indicated that four of the tribes previously listed as being in the planning stage had been awarded program start-up funds, plus two additional previously unlisted tribes were also awarded start-up grants. These awards increased the number of existing tribal transit services to 118, with an additional 45 tribes in the planning stage.

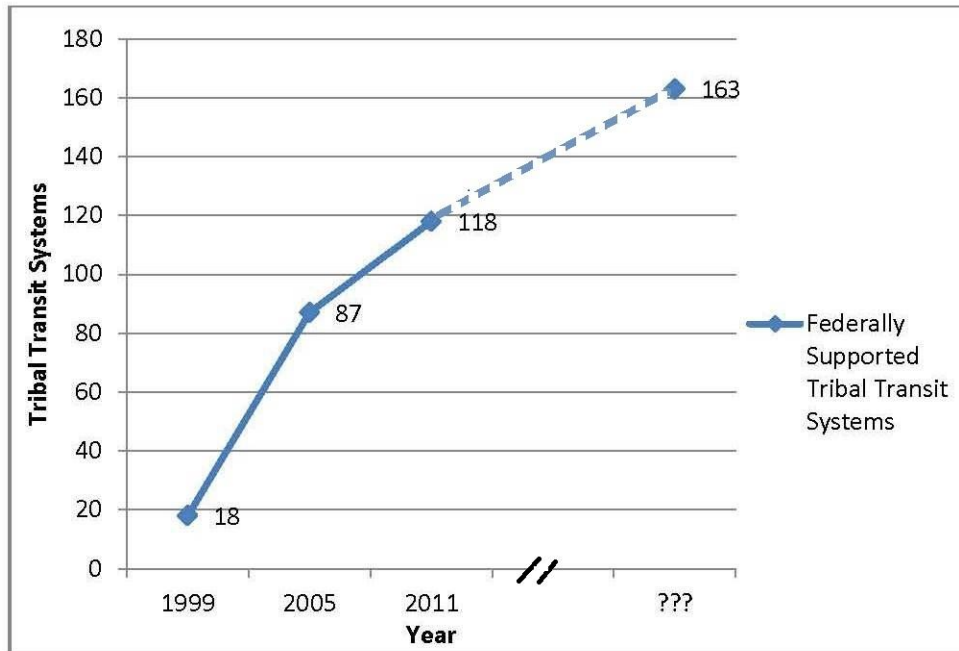


**Figure 2.1** FTA Regions and Corresponding Tribes and Transit Services

As the previous paragraph indicates, some tribes that are not currently identified as being in the planning process may, in fact, decide to initiate services. Note, however, that some of the tribes that are identified as being in the planning process may, in fact, decide against starting a transit program.

Only seven of the existing services identified in Figure 2.1 are located in Michigan, Illinois, and points south and east; the vast majority of existing and proposed services are in the Great Plains states and points west. As indicated earlier, these areas are typically sparsely populated and costly to serve via transit. This fact does not, however, negate the need for service, especially given the low-income status of many reservations and Alaska Native villages.

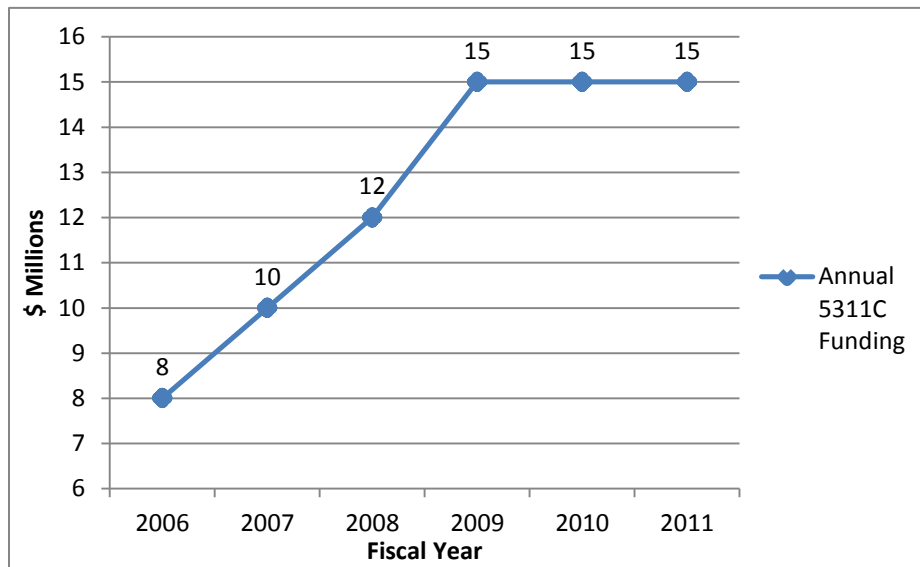
The growth in local tribal transit systems from 1999 to 2011 is summarized in Figure 2.2. As discussed in the Introduction, the CTAA reported that 18 tribes and Alaska Native villages received transit funding from the FTA in 1999. That number grew to an estimated 87 local systems in 2005 and 118 in 2011. Another 45 local tribal transit systems are being contemplated. The 5311(c) program has obviously promoted the creation and expansion of many local tribal transit programs. But, as Figure 2.2 illustrates, significant growth was already taking place prior to the passage of the federal SAFETEA-LU highway and transit funding bill in 2005. Growth beyond 2011 is expected but exact numbers and timing are indeterminable.



**Figure 2.2** Growth in Local Tribal Transit Systems

### 3. 5311(C) AND ARRA TRIBAL TRANSIT GRANTS

Congress' 2005 creation of the tribal transit program addressed the need indicators identified in the preceding section. It is widely accepted that personal mobility is an essential component of economic vitality, that many tribal areas are economically depressed, and that people living in these areas are often without means of personal mobility. The \$60 million provided by the 5311(c) tribal transit program contributed to the creation and expansion of many local tribal transit programs. These funds were provided with no requirements for a local match, an occurrence that is common with other federal tribal transportation programs. Another \$15 million is available for FY 2011. Annual funding amounts for the 5311(c) tribal transit program are summarized in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1** Annual 5311(c) Funding

Federal allocations to tribal transit programs were further increased by capital assistance funding provided by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Among other things, this program provided reservation and Alaska Native village transit programs with \$17 million for capital construction and acquisitions. As with the 5311(c) tribal transit program, this money required no local match. Approximately 100 of the 118 tribal transit services referred to earlier in Figure 2.1 have received 5311(c) start-up and/or enhancement grants. Table 3.1 summarizes federal start-up and enhancement grants that have been made to Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages via the tribal transit and ARRA programs since 2006. A full listing of grantees and grant amounts, by year, is presented in the Appendix.

**Table 3.1** 5311c & ARRA Tribal Transit Grant Summary

Year	Funds Granted	# of Requests	Funding Requested	Total Awards	Planning Grants	New Start Grants	Enhancement Grants
5311c FY 2006	\$8 M	95	\$22.1 M	63	34	13	16
5311c FY 2007	\$10 M	75	\$21.0 M	65	16	4	55
5311c FY 2008	\$12 M	89	\$24.0 M	71	15	5	52
5311c FY 2009	\$15 M	81	\$28.0 M	63	9	2	52
5311c FY 2010	\$15 M	96	\$36.8 M	59	2	7	50
ARRA FY 2009	\$17 M	71	\$54.0 M	39	NA	NA	NA

The 5311(c) program spurred a significant amount of interest in initiating tribal transit services. As Table 3.1 indicates, during the first year of the program, the FTA awarded 34 planning grants to tribes and Alaska Native villages, many of which may have been contemplating the initiation of local transit programs. These planning grants did not, however, result in a correspondingly high number of new start grants in subsequent years. There were only four new start grants in FY 2007 and five in FY 2008.

The number of planning grants has fallen precipitously since FY 2006, to the point that only two planning grants were awarded in FY 2010. This decline in planning activity and new start grants may indicate that the existing level of activity in terms of tribes and villages that are operating local transit services is somewhere near a peak and that future grant applications will focus more on maintaining and enhancing existing operations than on planning for and initiating new programs. Conversely, Figure 2.1 indicated that as many as 45 tribes and Alaska Native villages may be contemplating the initiation of local transit services and Table 3.1 indicates that 37 grant applications were not funded in FY 2010. Table 3.1 also indicates that the amount of funding requested grew by over 30% from FY 2009 to FY 2010. Interest in the program and the demand for program funds remain high.

A review of Federal Register notices for past years' 5311(c) awards indicates that few tribes or Alaska Native villages receive program funding on a yearly basis. For example, of the 59 new start and enhancement grant recipients in FY 2007, 14 of those entities did not receive program funding in FY 2008. This lack of repeat funding was more pronounced the following year when 26 of the prior year's 52 grantees did not receive funding. The same level of non-repeat funding occurred in FY 2010 when 24 FY 2009 recipients did not receive funding. Only eight tribes or Alaska Native villages have received operating grants every year.

Despite this lack of on-going funding, it does appear that first-time grantees do tend to receive funding in some later year. Of the 55 entities that received either start-up or enhancement grants in FY 2006 or 2007, only five did not receive additional program funding in FY 2008, 2009, or 2010. Once a tribe receives funding, it appears that they tend to get additional funding in some subsequent year, even if funding is not received year-in and year-out.

Note that the relative stability in the number of program participants does not necessarily equate to stability in the demand for program funds. For example, as the 5311(c) program matured between FY 2006 and 2009, funding rose from \$8 million to \$15 million per year. Related funding requests increased from \$22.1 million to \$28 million. However, while program funding remained stable at \$15 million in FY 2010, the demand for program funds increased to \$36.8 million. The number of unfunded applications increased from 18 in FY 2009 to 37 in FY 2010. Program participants obviously have ongoing operating needs, plans for service expansion, and/or additional capital acquisition and construction plans. The availability of future funding will dictate the extent to which many existing operations can expand to further enhance transit services to reservation and Alaska Native village residents.



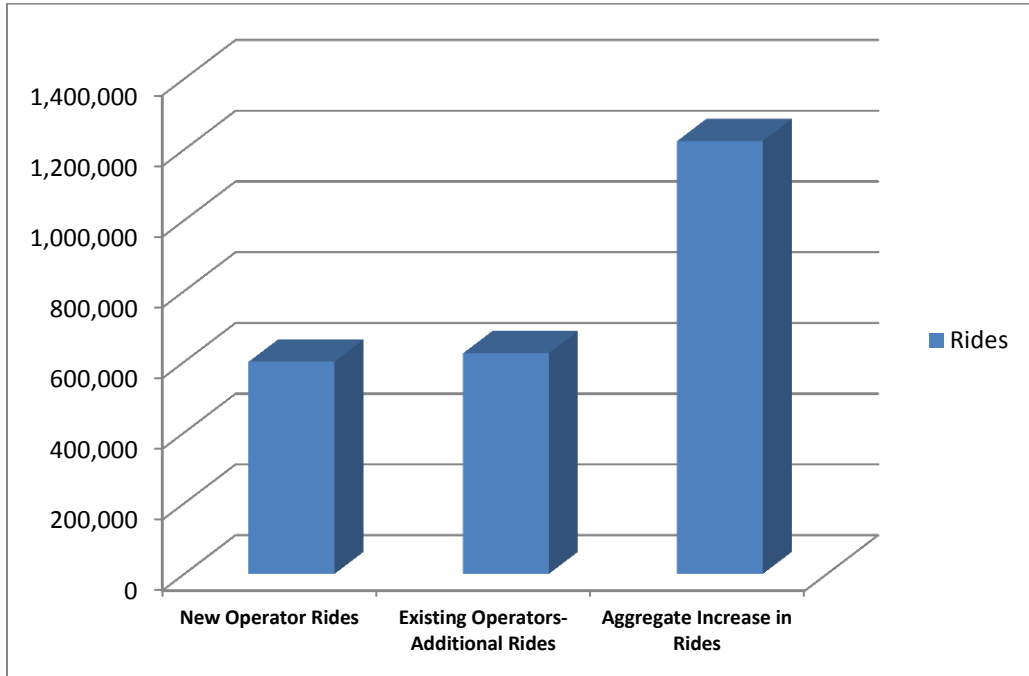
## 4. GRANTEE SERVICES AND PROGRAM RESULTS

As discussed earlier, 101 tribal and Alaska Native village entities received 5311(c) start-up or enhancement grants during the first five years of the 5311(c) tribal transit program. SURTC surveyed these entities to quantify program results. This survey was conducted electronically during July and August, 2011. All grantees were contacted via e-mail and asked to participate in the survey. Grantees were given the option of completing the survey online via SurveyMonkey or they could use a file attached to the survey e-mail. If they chose to use the attached file, they could fill it out electronically and e-mail it back or they could print it out, complete it, and then either scan it for an electronic return or mail it via traditional methods. For surveys that were submitted via something other than SurveyMonkey, SURTC entered related responses into a corresponding SurveyMonkey file in the name of each respondent, thereby generating a master file containing all respondents' input in SurveyMonkey. Partial or complete responses were received from 63 of the 101 tribal entities that received 5311(c) start-up and/or enhancement grants between 2006 and 2010. Respondents that submitted incomplete or inconsistent responses were contacted via e-mail and asked to provide additional information. The initial survey was distributed on July 12, 2011, and recipients were asked to respond by August 1, 2011. Reminder notices were sent out on July 21 to entities that had not responded. On August 2, non-respondents were notified that the deadline for submitting completed questionnaires had been extended to August 15.

As indicated above, partial or complete responses were received from 63 start-up and enhancement grantees. Five of these responses contained only related contact information and did not provide any of the requested operating or financial information. The remaining 58 responses contained all or much of the requested information.

As indicated in the Introduction, the number of tribal entities that operate transit services has increased significantly since the late 1990s. In 1999, only 18 tribal entities had received FTA funding but 101 had received 5311(c) startup and/or enhancement funds through FY 2010. Fifty-nine percent of all survey respondents indicated that their transit services had been started as a result of the 5311(c) program. The 25 new-start respondents that were providing services in FY 2010 indicated that they provided nearly 600,000 one-way passenger trips that year.

Sixteen non-startup respondents reported FY 2010 ridership of 1,066,913 one-way passenger trips. These same respondents reported that they provided 442,973 one-way passenger trips the year prior to receiving their first 5311(c) grants. For these operators, 5311(c) funding may, therefore, be credited with facilitating an incremental 624,000 rides, a 141% increase. Overall, 5311(c) funding may be credited with providing 1.2 million rides in FY 2010. These ridership totals are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

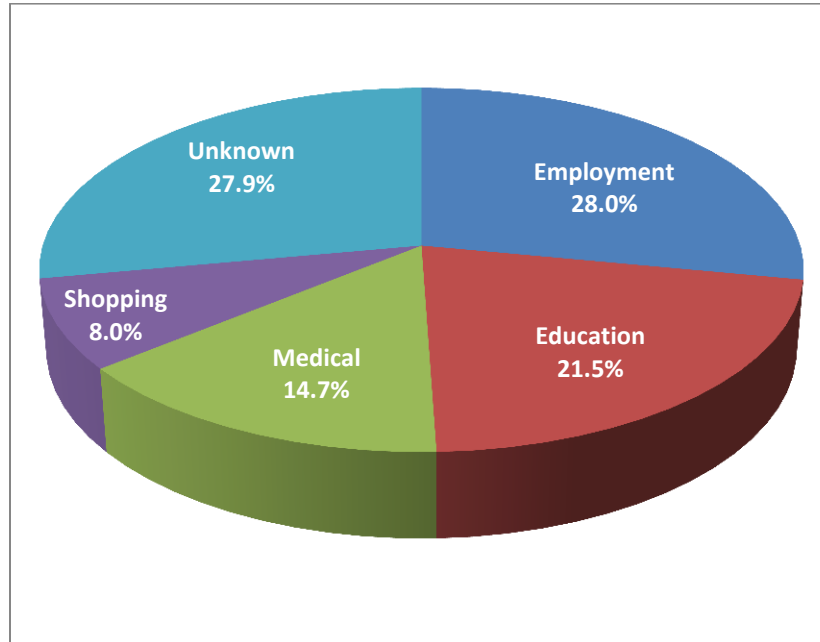


**Figure 4.1** Ridership Increases Related to Receipt of 5311(c) Funding

Note that the number of rides identified in Figure 4.1 is undoubtedly understated given the fact that not all 5311(c) recipients responded to the underlying survey.

Twenty-six respondents provided information concerning passenger trip purposes. As Figure 4.2 illustrates, these respondents indicated that approximately 28% of all trips were employment-related and 21.5% pertained to education; 14.7% of all trips were for medical purposes and 8% were for shopping. The remaining 27.9% of all trips were for unknown purposes.



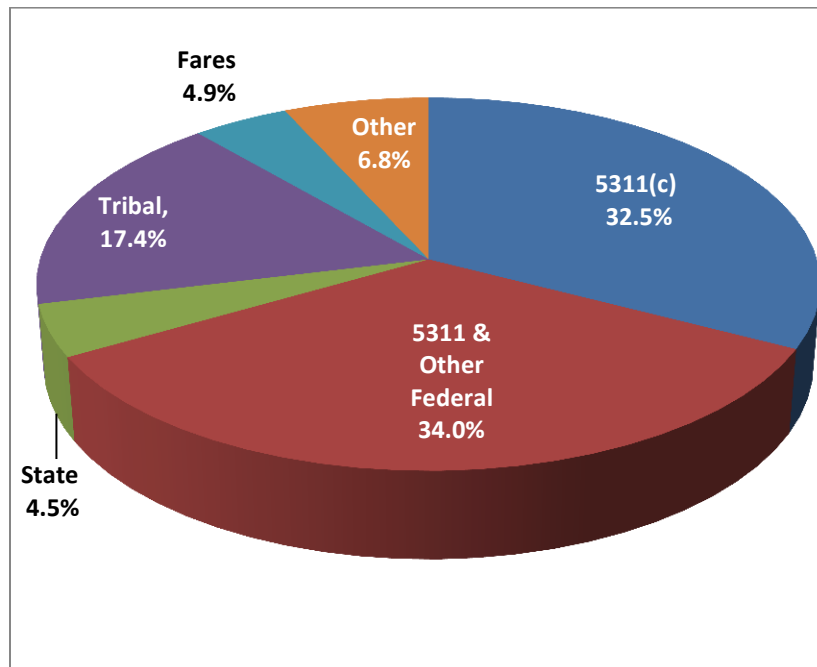


**Figure 4.2** Passenger Trip Purposes

Fifty-three respondents reported an aggregate fleet size of 381 vehicles, 121 of which were purchased with 5311(c) funds. It is assumed that a significant number of the non-5311(c) vehicles were purchased with 2009 ARRA stimulus funds. Respondents employed 380 full-time and 110 part-time employees and their vehicles logged 8.87 million miles in FY 2010. As was the case with ridership, these numbers are understated to the extent that not all program recipients responded to the SURTC survey.

Virtually 100% of respondents indicated that their services operate Monday-Friday. Approximately 43% provide services on Saturdays and 25% operate on Sundays. Ten respondents indicated that there is a need for longer service hours and service on weekends. Another 10 respondents indicated that they need to increase service to remote areas on their respective reservations. Numerous respondents indicated that a reduction in 5311(c) funding would result in service cuts or even a complete discontinuance of service.

Six survey respondents were in the process of initiating services and did not, therefore, have FY 2010 operating budgets to report. Forty-two respondents provided related financial data. As Figure 4.3 illustrates, these respondents indicated that 32.5% of their respective operating budgets came from the 5311(c) program; another 19.6% came from the traditional 5311 program and 14.4% came from other federal sources. State funding provided 4.5% of all operating funds, tribal sources provided 17.4%, and other sources accounted for 6.8%. Fares financed 4.9% of the operators' operating budgets. Ten of the 42 respondents indicated that the 5311(c) program provided virtually 100% of their operating funds.



**Figure 4.3** Operating Budget Funding Sources  
5311(c) Recipients – FY 2010 Survey Responses

The FTA’s National Transit Database (NTD) began collecting operating data from rural transit operators, including rural tribal services, in 2007. Related reports for FY 2009 indicate that the 5311(c) program provides an even higher portion of the average program participant’s budget than reported by survey respondents (41.1% vs. 32.5%). Many reporting tribes did not have 5311(c)-related expenditures to report. Based on the aggregate information submitted to the NTD by all tribes, both 5311(c) and others, the 5311(c) program financed 26.3% of all tribal transit operating expenditures in FY 2009.

Ninety-three percent of all survey respondents indicated that funding from other sources had not diminished since they received 5311(c) monies. Therefore, it appears that the provision of 5311(c) funding resulted in an increase in transit-related expenditures, rather than a reduction in funding from other sources.

Twenty-one respondents provided capital budget data. These respondents indicated that the 5311(c) program accounted for 8.7% of all capital funds and the traditional 5311 program provided 14.7%. Other federal sources, presumably the ARRA program and possibly Indian Reservation Roads funds, provided 56.7% of all capital funding and 3.7% came from state sources. Tribal sources provided 6.7% of capital monies and the remaining 9.7% came from other sources.

The 5311(c) program accounted for 37.1% of all FY 2009 capital expenditures reported to the NTD by program participants; it accounted for 29.9% of the capital expenditures for all responding tribes (both 5311(c) recipients and others). These percentages presumably declined, as reflected in SURTC’s survey, as a result of ARRA-related acquisitions in FY 2010.

In 2011, SURTC published what it expects will be an annual *Rural Transit Fact Book* based on rural NTD data. This publication included a variety of performance measures for all rural operators and specifically for tribal transit services for 2007, 2008, and 2009 (the most recent year for which data is

currently available). SURTC’s survey of 5311(c) operators in this current study can be used to compile similar measures for FY 2010.

SURTC’s 2011 *Rural Transit Fact Book* presents information on performance measures that are reflective of service effectiveness (trips/mile), cost effectiveness (cost/mile), and efficiency (cost/trip). Tables 4.1-4.3 present related data for all rural and tribal operators for 2007, 2008, and 2009, based on NTD data, and for tribal recipients of 5311(c) funds for FY 2010.

As Table 4.1 indicates, the passenger trips per mile performance measure remained relatively stable for both rural and tribal transit operators from 2007 to 2009. Tribal operators do, however, provide only about half the passenger trips per mile as compared to other rural operators. Note, however, that many of the tribal operators are relatively new and may be in the process of building a clientele and refining their operations. More established operations may result in more passenger trips per mile.

Also note that approximately 25% of all tribal transit services are provided on reservations that have fewer than six residents per square mile and do, therefore, approach frontier status. Very low population densities and long travel distances may also contribute to lower-than-average passenger trips per mile.

**Table 4.1 Passenger Trips Per Mile**

	2007 - NTD	2008 - NTD	2009 - NTD	2010 – SURTC Survey
Rural Operators	.25	.24	.23	NA
Tribal Operators	.12	.14	.12	.19

Table 4.1 also reports 0.19 passenger trips per mile for tribes that provided related information to SURTC’s 5311(c) survey. While this figure is encouraging relative to NTD’s 2007 and 2008 findings for both tribes and other rural operators, it is only a subset of all tribes and does not, therefore, necessarily represent a fair comparison. It is, none the less, an encouraging finding and hopefully represents an evolving trend.

Table 4.2 presents operating results based on operating expenses per passenger trip. It is interesting that the NTD finding for all rural operators shows a steadily rising cost per trip from 2007 to 2009, while tribal operators reported steadily declining costs per passenger trip. Tribal operators do show significantly higher costs, which may be related to both the newness of their operations and the extremely rural nature of many programs, but these findings do reflect ongoing improvements relative to cost effectiveness. The \$11.02 per passenger trip reported by 5311(c) operators for 2010, while being reported by only a subset of tribal operators, is an encouraging statistic.

**Table 4.2 Operating Expenses Per Passenger Trip**

	2007 – NTD	2008 - NTD	2009 - NTD	2010 – SURTC Survey
Rural Operators	9.37	9.57	9.91	NA
Tribal Operators	18.41	17.72	15.75	11.02

Table 4.3 illustrates that rural and tribal operators achieved relatively similar operating expenses per mile in 2007 and 2008, with tribal costs consistently being seven to nine cents per mile lower. In 2009 tribal operators reported significantly lower per mile costs than all rural operators (\$1.96 vs. \$2.31). Respondents to SURTC’s 5311(c) survey reported similar per mile costs in FY 2010 (\$2.06 per mile).

**Table 4.3 Operating Expenses Per Mile**

	2007 - NTD	2008 - NTD	2009 - NTD	2010 – SURTC Survey
Rural Operators	2.34	2.30	2.31	NA
Tribal Operators	2.27	2.39	1.96	2.06

The *Rural Transit Fact Book* also reports the percentage of operating expenses that rural and tribal operators cover with farebox revenue. As Table 4.4 indicates, rural operators consistently covered 8% of their operating costs with fare revenue. Tribal operators, on the other hand, covered only between 4% and 6% of their operating costs via fares. This lower farebox recovery ratio may be a direct result of both higher overall operating costs and lower fares which may, in turn, be directly related to extremely high poverty levels on many reservations. Only 17 respondents to SURTC’s 5311(c) survey provided information regarding fares. These 17 operators achieved a 5% farebox recovery ratio in 2010 – a number that is very consistent with prior years’ NTD findings. Some tribal transit operators do not charge a fare.

**Table 4.4 Farebox Recovery Ratio**

	2007 – NTD	2008 - NTD	2009 - NTD	2010 – SURTC Survey
Rural Operators	.08	.08	.08	NA
Tribal Operators	.05	.06	.04	.05

As previously discussed, survey respondents indicated that approximately 32.5% of their FY 2010 operating budgets were funded with 5311(c) tribal transit monies. Ten respondents indicated that 100% of their operating budget came from the 5311(c) program.

As is the case with any business, diversity in income sources is healthy and helps ensure longevity if any one funding source declines or is eliminated. It would be prudent, therefore, if tribal transit services pursue multiple funding sources, rather than being totally or largely dependent on the 5311(c) program. This is true regardless of whether the program is eliminated, underfunded, maintained, or increased. This diversity would be especially prudent as it appears that the overall demand for program funding is increasing as a function of inflation, an expansion of services by existing operators, and an increase in the number of tribes and Alaska Native villages that are offering transit services.

The National Center on Senior Transportation and the National Rural Transit Assistance Program prepared a 2010 guidebook entitled *Crossing Great Divides: A Guide to Elder Mobility Resources and Solutions in Indian Country*. This guidebook and a 2007 National Cooperative Highway Research Program report, *NCHRP Synthesis 336 – Tribal Transportation Programs*, identified numerous funding sources that might be available to help fund transit operations. Additional funding sources are identified in SURTC's *Tribal Transit – Principles of Transit Management* resource materials. Many of the identified sources are available only to tribes. Potential funding sources include:

- FTA 5311 and 5311(c) grants
- Other FTA programs (5309, 5310, 5311(b)(3), 5311(f), 5316, and 5317)
- Indian Reservation Roads Program
- Administration on Aging - Older Americans Act, Title VI
- Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Head Start, and Veterans Administration
- Administration for Native Americans
- Indian Health Service and Community Health Representative Program
- State departments of transportation
- Foundations, gifts, donations, and bequests
- In-kind local match
- Advertising sales
- Contract rides
- Fundraising
- Gaming/casino funds and other local funding sources
- Fare income

Developing and cultivating a wide variety of funding sources is a time-consuming process, but it may also be necessary to ensure the long-term success of many local transit services.

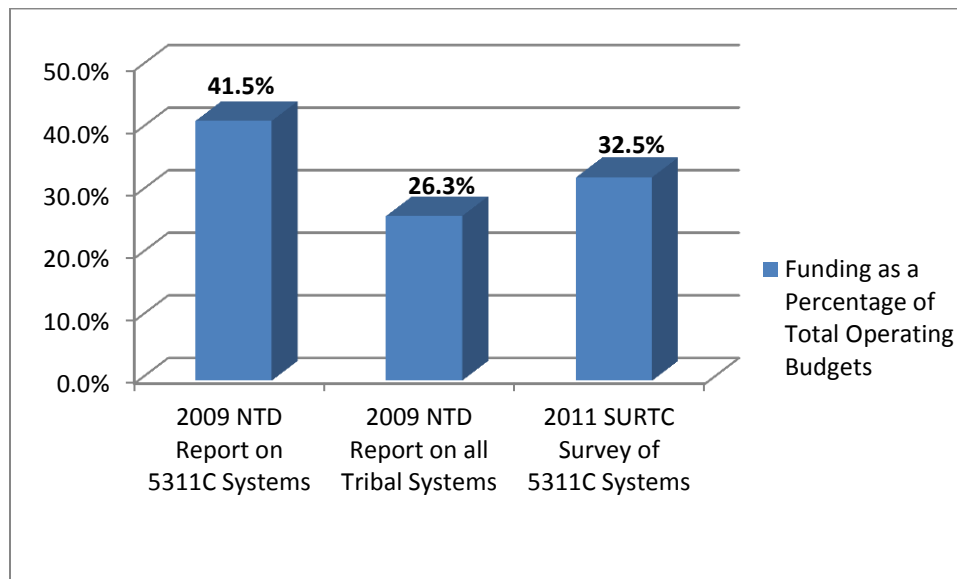


## 5. FUTURE FUNDING DISCUSSIONS

As discussed in Section 2, the number of tribal transit services in the United States grew from fewer than 20 in 1999 to nearly 120 in 2011. Much of this growth may be directly attributed to SAFETEA-LU and the 100% (no local match) funding that it provides to new and existing tribal transit programs. Funding for the FTA's 5311(c) tribal transit program started at \$8 million in 2006 and grew to \$15 million in 2009. Subsequent continuing resolutions by Congress have kept funding levels at \$15 million per year. Funding requests increased from \$22.1 million for FY 2006 to \$36.8 million for FY 2010.

For FY 2009, 51 tribal transit operators provided operating data to the NTD; 27 of those received 5311(c) monies. As indicated in Section 4, 5311(c) recipients reported that program funds financed 41.1% of all operating expenditures. The program paid 26.3% of the operating expenses reported by all 51 reporting tribes. For FY 2010, respondents to the SURTC survey discussed earlier indicated that 5311(c) funding covered 32.5% of all operating costs. Ten tribes indicated that program funds were their only source of operating monies.

As the preceding paragraph illustrates, the exact degree of dependence on 5311(c) funding is difficult to ascertain. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, program participants may be dependent on program funding for between 32.4% and 41.1% of their overall operating budget. Based in 2009 NTD reports, it appears that the 5311(c) program provides about 26.3% of the funding for all of the nation's local tribal transit systems.



**Figure 5.1** 5311(c) Funding as a Percentage of Total Operating Budgets

It appears that Congress recognized the importance of personal mobility, the extreme poverty that exists on many reservations, and the corresponding need for transit services when it provided 100% tribal transit monies via SAFETEA-LU. As deliberations take place regarding a future federal highway/transit funding bill, related decisions will have to be made concerning appropriate funding levels for the tribal transit program.

As indicated in the Introduction, the National Congress of American Indians and the Intertribal Transportation Association's Joint Task Force on Tribal Transportation has urged Congress to increase funding for the tribal transit program to \$85 million per year. Initial funding would start at \$35 million per year with subsequent increases of \$10 million per year until a funding level of \$85 million is reached.

There appears to be some rationale for the \$35 million target. The NTD's FY 2009 report on rural transit indicates that 1,413 rural service providers had an aggregate operating budget of \$1.1 billion, thereby producing an average annual budget of approximately \$816,000. Assuming a corresponding budget for each of the nation's 120 tribal transit systems, the aggregate tribal transit operating budget would be \$97.9 million. SURTC's recent survey of 5311(c) recipients indicated that respondents are, on average, depending on 5311(c) money for about 32.5% of their operating budget. A \$35 million appropriation would, therefore, finance slightly over one-third of a composite \$98 million operating budget.

Note, however, that the same NTD report indicated that the 51 responding tribes had an average operating budget of \$19.4 million or about \$380,000 per tribal entity, about half of the average for all rural operators. These operators reported spending, on average, another \$63,200 on capital items. NTD respondents were depending on 5311(c) funds to cover 41.1% of their operating costs and 37.1% of their capital expenditures.

Assuming an average operating and capital budget of \$450,000, the nation's 120 tribal operators would have an aggregate budget of \$54 million. Financing one-third of this amount with 5311(c) money would require an annual appropriation of \$18 million. Taking the 5311(c) commitment up to 40% would require \$21.6 million. Conversely, assuming an average budget similar to all rural operators (\$816,000) and aggregate spending of the \$97.9 million mentioned above, a one-third federal subsidy would require \$32.6 million per year. A 40% federal share would require \$39.2 million annually.

Several factors suggest that funding in the \$20 million range may be insufficient. The first of these is the current demand for funding. As indicated earlier in Table 3.1, FY 2010 grant applications requested \$36.8 million, \$21.8 million more than the \$15 million that was available; 37 of the 96 applications were not funded.

A second funding level consideration is inflation. Fuel prices, for example, have risen dramatically since FY 2009 and are having a significant impact on all transit operators. This and other cost increases have undoubtedly resulted in either larger budgets or cuts in service for many tribal transit operations.

A third item that may result in greater funding needs is the growth in each operator's scope of service, an occurrence that is directly related to the fact that the vast majority of the nation's tribal transit services are less than 10 years old. As with any start-up system, it is assumed that demands for service have increased, both in terms of areas served and service hours and days. Average budgets may, therefore, have increased beyond those reported to the NTD for FY 2009.

Another factor that may create an increase in demands for program funds is the number of tribal transit systems in operation in the country. The previously discussed 2009 interim report for TCRP Project H-38 suggested that nearly 50 tribes and Alaska Native villages are contemplating the initiation of local transit services. This occurrence would cause a significant impact on the demand for 5311(c) funds, especially during the start-up phase when the need for vehicles and facilities is high and the availability of other funds may be low.



As the preceding paragraphs suggest, there are many uncertainties regarding the future need for 5311(c) funding. At a minimum, it appears that \$18 million may be needed annually to provide 120 tribal transit operators with 33% of a \$450,000 operating and capital budget. As is currently the case, it is assumed that not all tribes would receive funding each year and that some grants would, therefore, be significantly higher than \$450,000 and 33% of a grantee's overall budget.

Going forward, it may be prudent to continue to provide 100% funding to encourage new start-ups and to address extreme poverty situations. In many instances, however, tribal transit operators should seek diversity in funding sources. In actuality, current 5311(c) funding levels are already forcing most tribes and Alaska Native villages to seek funding from multiple sources.

Tables 5.1-5.3 provide some parameters for future 5311(c) funding levels. Each table identifies annual funding needs based on various average operator budgets and the percent of expenses that might be financed with 5311(c) funds. Table 5.1 is based on the existence of the current 120 tribal transit systems in the country. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 assume the existence of 150 and 170 tribes, respectively. The 170 total is based on the existing 120 tribes plus the potential for another 50 tribal transit systems as suggested by the TCRP H-38 Project.

**Table 5.1** Annual Need for 5311c Funds – 120 Tribes

Average Annual Budget	5311(c) Portion of Average Annual Budget					
	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%
\$450,000	\$13.5M	\$16.2M	\$18.9M	\$21.6M	\$24.3M	\$27.0M
\$500,000	\$15.0M	\$18.0M	\$21.0M	\$24.0M	\$27.0M	\$30.0M
\$550,000	\$16.5M	\$19.8M	\$23.1M	\$26.4M	\$29.7M	\$33.0M
\$600,000	\$18.0M	\$21.6M	\$25.2M	\$28.8M	\$32.4M	\$36.0M
\$650,000	\$19.5M	\$23.4M	\$27.3M	\$31.2M	\$35.1M	\$39.0M
\$700,000	\$21.0M	\$25.2M	\$29.4M	\$33.6M	\$37.8M	\$42.0M
\$750,000	\$22.5M	\$27.0M	\$31.5M	\$36.0M	\$40.5M	\$45.0M

**Table 5.2** Annual Need for 5311(c) Funds – 150 Tribes

Average Annual Budget	5311(c) Portion of Average Annual Budget					
	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%
\$450,000	\$16.9M	\$20.3M	\$23.6M	\$27.0M	\$30.4M	\$33.8M
\$500,000	\$18.8M	\$22.5M	\$26.3M	\$30.0M	\$33.8M	\$37.5M
\$550,000	\$20.6M	\$24.8M	\$28.9M	\$33.0M	\$37.1M	\$41.3M
\$600,000	\$22.5M	\$27.0M	\$31.5M	\$36.0M	\$40.5M	\$45.0M
\$650,000	\$24.4M	\$29.3M	\$34.1M	\$39.0M	\$43.9M	\$48.8M
\$700,000	\$26.3M	\$31.5M	\$36.8M	\$42.0M	\$47.3M	\$52.5M
\$750,000	\$28.1M	\$33.8M	\$39.4M	\$45.0M	\$50.6M	\$56.3M

**Table 5.3** Annual Need for 5311(c) Funds – 170 Tribes

Average Annual Budget	5311(c) Portion of Average Annual Budget					
	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%
\$450,000	\$19.1M	\$23.0M	\$26.8M	\$30.6M	\$34.4M	\$38.3M
\$500,000	\$21.3M	\$25.5M	\$29.8M	\$34.0M	\$38.3M	\$42.5M
\$550,000	\$23.4M	\$28.1M	\$32.7M	\$37.4M	\$42.1M	\$46.8M
\$600,000	\$25.5M	\$30.6M	\$35.7M	\$40.8M	\$45.9M	\$51.0M
\$650,000	\$27.6M	\$33.2M	\$38.7M	\$44.2M	\$49.7M	\$55.3M
\$700,000	\$29.8M	\$35.7M	\$41.7M	\$47.6M	\$53.6M	\$60.0M
\$750,000	\$31.9M	\$38.3M	\$44.6M	\$51.0M	\$57.4M	\$63.8M

As these tables illustrate, required funding levels vary depending on the number of tribes that receive funding and the level of 5311(c) funding in each recipient's overall budget. Note that, while the upper-end \$63.8 million in funding is well below the \$85 million requested by the National Congress of American Indians and the Intertribal Transportation Association's Joint Task Force, increasing that amount by 5% per year for a six-year federal highway/transit bill yields a final year funding level of over \$81 million.

As discussed earlier, not all tribal transit operators receive 5311(c) funding every year, and some operators are dependent on program funds for 100% of their budget. These factors, combined with the growing number of tribal transit systems in the country, make it impossible to accurately project how much program funding will be needed in future years.

Despite the inability to accurately predict future funding needs, it is widely agreed that many reservations and Alaska Native villages are impoverished areas and that personal mobility is a significant contributor to economic growth, employment and educational opportunities, access to health services, and overall quality of life. Given these factors, the lack of other transportation options, and the high cost of personal transportation (or the total lack thereof), Congress has provided 100% money via the FTA's 5311(c) tribal transit program to encourage the initiation and expansion of tribal transit services. Future discussions will, therefore, focus on how to appropriately fund this program. It is hoped that this report's presentation will help frame these discussions.



## **APPENDIX: 5311(C) AND ARRA GRANTEES**

### 5311(c) Start-Up/Enhancement Grantees and ARRA Recipients

Tribe / Transit Authority	State	FY2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	Total 5311(c) Grants	2009 ARRA	Total Grants
Asa'Carsarmut Tribal Council	AK		165,366				165,366	223,000	388,366
Bishop Paiute Tribe	CA		55,000		76,424		131,424		131,424
Blackfeet Tribe	MT		107,820				107,820		107,820
Blue Lake Rancheria	CA			120,000	231,000	230,000	581,000		581,000
Bois Forte Reservation	MN					397,335	397,335		397,335
Catawba Indian Nation	SC		225,000			55,000	280,000	240,000	520,000
Cen. Council Tlingit & Haida Tribes	AK			250,000			250,000		250,000
Cherokee Nation	OK			250,000	204,855	392,930	847,785		847,785
Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes	OK				400,000	400,000	800,000	419,301	1,219,301
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	SD			157,500		200,000	357,500		357,500
Chickaloon Native Village	AK				293,931		293,931		293,931
Chickasaw Nation	OK	349,164	315,234	300,000	350,000	350,000	1,664,398		1,664,398
Chippewa Cree Tribe of Rocky Boy's Res.	MT			200,000	300,000	300,000	800,000		800,000
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	OK	158,000	158,000	158,000	165,583	165,583	805,166	480,374	1,285,540
Citizen Potawatomi Nation	OK	285,000	275,774	276,000	271,326	373,131	1,481,231		1,481,231
Cocopah Indian Tribe	AZ	208,000	211,200		247,440	242,860	909,500		909,500
Coeur d'Alene Tribe	ID		225,000	225,000	225,000		675,000	1,500,000	2,175,000
Comanche Nation	OK			160,000			160,000		160,000
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	MT	373,274	250,000	250,000		235,000	1,108,274	358,471	1,466,745
Conf. Tribes and Bands of Yakama Nation	WA	490,890	400,000	442,373	1,000,000		2,333,263	112,000	2,445,263
Conf. Tribes of Colville Indian Reservation	WA	156,000	155,000	155,000			466,000		466,000
Conf. Tribes of Grand Ronde	OR	247,340	198,110	198,110		248,000	891,560		891,560
Conf. Tribes of Siletz Indians	OR					164,000	164,000		164,000
Conf. Tribes of Umtilla Indian Reservation	OR		150,000	200,000	304,940	304,900	959,840		959,840
Cowlitz Indian Tribe	WA		200,000	200,000	205,184	373,658	978,842		978,842
Crooked Creek	AK				55,227	65,427	120,654	115,698	236,352
Crow Nation	OK					500,000	500,000		500,000
Delaware Nation	OK				188,270		188,270		188,270
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	NC	100,000	172,900	172,900	190,000	190,000	825,800	2,000,000	2,825,800
Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe	NV					270,000	270,000		270,000

### 5311(c) Start-Up/Enhancement Grantees and ARRA Recipients

Tribes / Transit Authority	State	FY2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	Total 5311(c) Grants	2009 ARRA	Total Grants
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	MN			225,000			225,000		225,000
Fort Belknap Indian Community	MT		218,000	218,000			436,000	340,000	776,000
Grand Portage Reservation Tribal Council	MN	60,000	60,000				120,000		120,000
Gulkana Village Council	AK	232,600	200,000	200,000	288,500		921,100		921,100
Havasupai Tribe	AZ				222,813		222,813		222,813
Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians	ME	99,171	57,017				156,188		156,188
Indian Health Services	CA		75,000				75,000		75,000
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe	WA				78,280		78,280		78,280
Kaibab Paiute Tribal Transportation	AZ					103,500	103,500		103,500
Kalispel Tribe of Indians	WA	167,547	208,296	208,296	417,896		1,002,035	335,600	1,337,635
Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma	OK		262,000	262,000	214,000	331,972	1,069,972		1,069,972
Klamath Tribes	OR		150,000	150,000			300,000		300,000
Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe	WI		161,632	109,068	200,000		470,700	200,000	670,700
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribal Council	MN				473,503		473,503		473,503
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe	SD		150,000	150,000	318,168	230,668	848,836		848,836
Lummi Tribe	WA	306,500	200,000	200,000	260,510	260,510	1,227,520		1,227,520
Manley Village Council	AK				127,730		127,730	140,000	267,730
Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin	WI	270,002	150,000			438,885	858,887		858,887
Miami Tribe of Oklahoma	OK		154,760		414,547	414,557	983,864	473,277	1,457,141
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	MS			192,000		41,910	233,910	192,000	425,910
Muscogee (Creek) Nation	OK		225,000	225,000	225,000		675,000		675,000
Navajo Nation	AZ	500,000				500,000	1,000,000	2,200,000	3,200,000
Nez Perce Tribe	ID		250,000	250,000		250,000	750,000	311,303	1,061,303
Northern Cheyenne Tribe	MT	400,000		157,500		362,000	919,500		919,500
Oglala Sioux Tribe	SD	327,869	150,000	300,000	250,000	250,000	1,277,869	350,000	1,627,869
Ohkay Owingeh	NM			155,000	120,000	205,085	480,085	156,000	636,085
Orutsarmiut Native Council	AK	105,193	136,370	175,000			416,563		416,563
Poarch Band of Creek Indians	AL	75,139					75,139		75,139

### 5311(c) Start-Up/Enhancement Grantees and ARRA Recipients

Tribe / Transit Authority	State	FY2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	Total 5311(c) Grants	2009 ARRA	Total Grants
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation	KS	360,000		225,000	360,000		945,000	186,417	1,131,417
Ponca Tribe of Nebraska	NE		216,500	216,500		151,554	584,554		584,554
Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma	OK	207,836	207,119	208,000	257,326	174,367	1,054,648		1,054,648
Pueblo of Laguna	NM				287,398		287,398	200,000	487,398
Pueblo of San Idelfonso	NM					131,582	131,582		131,582
Pueblo of Santa Ana	NM		240,221	150,000		193,000	583,221		583,221
Pueblos of Tesuque - NC Reg. Transit Dist.	NM			250,000		110,000	360,000		360,000
Quinalut Indian Nation	WA			200,000	200,000		400,000	398,000	798,000
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	WI				127,530		127,530		127,530
Red Lake Band of the Chippewa	MN	199,817	200,000		468,263	439,284	1,307,364	594,268	1,901,632
Reno-Sparks Indian Colony	NV				373,985		373,985	328,668	702,653
Reservation Transportation Authority	CA		425,104	400,000	370,082	400,000	1,595,186	1,100,000	2,695,186
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	SD			100,000			100,000		100,000
San Carlos Apache Tribe	AZ		200,000			214,739	414,739		414,739
Sandoval County Transit	NM				439,500		439,500		439,500
Santa Clara Pueblo	NM			125,000			125,000		125,000
Santee Sioux Nation	NE		195,800	195,800	270,682	221,934	884,216		884,216
Seldovia Village Tribe	AK				200,000		200,000	475,000	675,000
Seminole Nation	OK	145,000	220,000	220,000	500,000		1,085,000	330,169	1,415,169
Shoshone and Arapahoe Tribes	WY					400,000	400,000	400,000	800,000
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	ID				350,000		350,000	264,700	614,700
Sitka Tribe of Alaska	AK	265,207	172,900	172,900	269,791	270,000	1,150,798		1,150,798
Snoqualmie Indian Tribe	WA	274,169	250,130		334,909	329,013	1,188,221		1,188,221
Southern Ute Indian Tribe	CO			157,000		238,986	395,986		395,986
Spirit Lake Tribe	ND			250,000			250,000		250,000
Spokane Tribe of Indians	WA					141,733	141,733	255,000	396,733
Squaxin Island Tribe	WA			146,564			146,564		146,564
Standing Rock Public Transportation	ND		225,000	225,000	234,000	206,745	890,745	500,000	1,390,745



**5311(c) Start-Up/Enhancement Grantees and ARRA Recipients**

<b>Tribe / Transit Authority</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>FY2006</b>	<b>FY 2007</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>FY 2009</b>	<b>FY 2010</b>	<b>Total 5311(c) Grants</b>	<b>2009 ARRA</b>	<b>Total Grants</b>
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indian	ND		225,000	225,000		237,000	687,000	311,000	998,000
Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians	WA		94,355	150,000		186,000	430,355		430,355
Susanville Indian Rancheria	CA	99,253	206,082		220,554	200,000	725,889	327,174	1,053,063
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	WA			225,000		245,310	470,310	120,000	590,310
Tetlin Village Council	AK			225,000	216,470	216,470	657,940		657,940
Tohono O'Odham Nation	AZ					389,693	389,693		389,693
Tulalip Tribe	WA				151,216	236,702	387,918	126,748	514,666
United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians	OK		327,000	216,000			543,000		543,000
White Mountain Apache Tribe	AZ					362,500	362,500		362,500
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska	NE	457,580		200,000	707,796		1,365,376	235,030	1,600,406
Yankton Sioux Tribe	SD				117,371		117,371		117,371
Yavapai- Apache Nation	AZ					325,500	325,500		325,500
Yurok Tribe	CA	164,484	122,347	255,489		155,940	698,260		698,260
ARRA-only Grantees:									
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	OR							235,802	235,802
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	MN							200,000	200,000
Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi	MI							240,000	240,000
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$7,085,035</b>	<b>\$9,600,037</b>	<b>\$11,630,000</b>	<b>\$14,777,000</b>	<b>\$15,024,963</b>	<b>\$58,117,035</b>	<b>\$16,975,000</b>	<b>\$75,092,035</b>