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**NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL DELEGATE ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT OF  
INTERTRIBAL TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION**

Navajo Nation Council delegate and Transportation and Community Development Committee member Willie Tracey, Jr. was re-elected as the Vice President of the Intertribal Transportation Association during its annual meeting and conference in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 4, 2006.

Tracey was nominated and selected as the Vice President by those member-tribes present. Selected as President of ITA was C. John Healy, Sr., of the Fort Belknap Nation and selected as Secretary was Evelyn Roundstone.

This is the 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference for the organization, which consists of more than 30 member-tribes, as well as numerous individuals and associates. The theme for the conference this year was “Renewal of a Tribal Commitment to Improve the Evolution of Our Transportation Systems.”

The theme reflects the Association’s mission statement, which is “To help Tribal Elected Leadership address tribal transportation concerns, issues, needs, programs, and policies to assist tribes and tribal communities in the evolution of their transportation systems and programs.”

While reviewing the agenda for the meeting, John Smith of the Wind River Tribes reiterated that the members want to revitalize the ITA and put forth much effort toward the highway bill Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Efficiency Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

SAFETEA-LU, which was enacted on August 10, 2005, replaces the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21). It authorizes federal surface transportation programs from 2005 to 2009.

As the Vice President of ITA, Tracey addressed the participants during the banquet on Wednesday, December 6, 2006.

“We all have a unique duty and responsibility as we play a role in contributing to tribal transportation system needs. As we are gathered here today, our children are in school back home soon to be excused for Christmas break. This gives us the opportunity to

entertain methods and follow through with procedures to improve the school bus routes,” Tracey said. “Simultaneously, our elders, as well as the general public must obtain professional health care services. We must delicately address various specific tribal provisions of SAFETEA-LU and make recommendations to ensure people safely commute to work and obtain goods and services for survival needs.”

Tracey said that bringing the conveniences of an urban transportation system to rural areas seemed like a dream today but it could become a reality in the future.

“We must promote membership. We must demonstrate to the invaluable service and resource providers that we are able to work as a team, able to collectively advocate for tribal transportation needs,” Tracey said. “We need a flexible plan using specific provisions of SAFETEA-LU, a tangible measurable strategy with clear standards and plan of actions. “

ITA members also heard from Butch Wlaschin from the Department of Transportation on the SAFETEA-LU bill during the conference. He noted that with the bill, there will be new roles for the Federal Highway Administration, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Transit Administration with regard to Indian roads.

Wlaschin further encouraged the member-tribes to sell their successes to the federal government so that legislators and administrators would know what works for Indian communities and that pro-active involvement is taking place by the tribes.

Wlaschin cited three tribes as good examples of tribes initiating innovative programs, including the Wind River Tribes, the Navajo Nation and the Oglala Sioux Nation.

“It’s impressive. The Navajos are trying to map the roads. It’s a really good database,” he said.

He encouraged the Association to continue to hold transportation summits and to take part in state-level meetings on transportation issues.