



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

National Policy Memorandum

**Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Office of Indian Services
Division of Transportation**

Number: NPM-TRANS-1

Effective: JAN 20 2012

Expires: JAN 20 2013

Title: Policy to Establish and Implement a Sign Assessment or Management Method to Maintain Minimum Levels of Retroreflectivity on BIA Roads

1. Purpose

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is responsible for managing an adequate and safe BIA road and bridge inventory system for the Indian reservations, Indian lands and communities in the United States of America. The purpose of this policy is to establish a method to comply with new standards in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), 2009 edition, regarding new minimum levels of traffic sign retroreflectivity. Retroreflectivity is a term used to describe how light is reflected off a surface and returned to its original source ("retro"-reflector). Traffic sign sheeting materials use technology with small glass beads or prismatic reflectors that allow light from vehicle headlights to be reflected to the vehicle and the driver's eyes, thus making the sign appear more bright and visible to the driver.

2. Scope

The Indian Reservation Road (IRR) inventory is comprised of approximately 145,000 miles of public roads that provide access to or are located within Indian reservations, lands, communities and Alaska Native villages. These public roads are the responsibility of public authorities (23 USC 101(a) Definitions) with jurisdiction over their various roads. The BIA road system is a subset of the IRR and is approximately 29,000 miles of existing roads.

This policy applies to all BIA-owned transportation facilities. While tribally-owned transportation facilities are not bound by this policy, it is recommended that those tribes that own transportation facilities adopt this policy or implement a similar policy independently. Because of the nature of the regulation (23 CFR 655 Subpart F), the requirements for maintaining minimum levels of retroreflectivity shall be included in all scopes of works for contracts for program activities associated with road maintenance,

construction and reconstruction of BIA roads and bridges.

3. Definitions

- A. Retroreflectivity.** For purposes of this policy “retroreflectivity” means the special type of reflection that redirects incident light (i.e., from headlights) back toward the source. In the case of highway application, traffic signs are made with retroreflective sign sheeting material that redirects headlamp illumination back toward the vehicle, thereby making the sign visible at nighttime to the vehicle driver.
- B. Indian Reservation Roads.** For purposes of this policy “Indian Reservation Roads” means public roads that are located within or provide access to an Indian reservation, or Indian trust land, or restricted Indian land which is not subject to fee title alienation without the approval of the Federal government, or Indian and Alaska Native villages, group, or communities in which Indians and Alaskan Natives reside, whom the Secretary of the Interior has determined are eligible for services generally available to Indians under Federal laws.
- C. BIA-owned.** For purposes of this policy “BIA- owned” means the existing public road system within the Indian Reservation Road system. This is the system that the BIA has, or plans to obtain, a legal right-of way and therefore the Secretary of the Interior has the responsibility to maintain. The BIA road system consists of approximately 29,000 miles of paved, gravel and earth surface roadways.
- D. Tribally-owned.** For purposes of this policy “Tribally-owned” means the existing public road system within the IRR system. This is the system that a tribe has, or plans to obtain, a legal right-of-way and the “tribe” has the responsibility to maintain. Within the IRR road system approximately 13,500 miles of paved, gravel and earth surface roadways are Tribally-owned.
- E. Blanket Replacement.** For purposes of this policy “Blanket Replacement” means all signs in an area/corridor or of a given type, which should be replaced at specified intervals. This eliminates the need to assess retroreflectivity or track the life of individual signs. The replacement interval is based on the expected sign life, compared to the minimum levels, for the shortest-life material used on the affected signs.
- F. Public Authority.** For purposes of this policy “Public Authority” means a Federal, State, county, town, or township, Indian tribe, municipal or other local government or instrumentality with authority to finance, build, operate, or maintain toll or toll-free facilities.

4. Policy

It is the policy of the BIA, in order to comply with the latest provisions of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and 23 CFR 665 Subpart F, that the sign assessment or management method of compliance will be “Blanket Replacement”. Exception to this method may be allowed depending on individual locations because of

remoteness and other factors such as average daily traffic, but only with the written approval of the Deputy Director, Office of Indian Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Compliance Method

Implementation by January 2012 has been interpreted by the BIA to be a recorded written policy established under the authority of the Director, BIA. To establish and meet compliance, the "Blanket Replacement" method is identified as the Bureau wide method to maintain minimum levels of retroreflectivity on BIA-owned transportation facilities. Given the nature of the BIA road inventory, inventory of signage, this method is the most appropriate to implement and allows for the least amount of analysis and validation.

A method should be based on a community's unique geography, size of sign population, strengths and abilities. Therefore, Regional Offices may consider optional or additional methods while maintaining compliance under the authority of the new standards to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), 2009 edition. The Deputy Director, Office of Indian Services will review and approve any optional methods.

An assessment of national BIA road inventory data will determine a priority list by Region based on age of existing facilities (construction/reconstruction date), average daily traffic, classification, terrain and surface type, which will provide Regional Offices with a priority plan for assessment and replacement.

Sign replacement under this method must adhere to current MUTCD requirements. The BIA has also determined the type sign sheeting that meets the new standards; the High Intensity Prismatic (HIP) reflective sheeting is most cost effective in meeting this objective. Optional sign sheeting may be considered should local budget constraints be a concern.

Timeframe

This policy is effective on the date of approval and will remain in effect for one year. After one year, the policy will be reviewed for relevance and revised, rescinded, or incorporated into the Indian Affairs Manual.

Within 6 months of approval of this policy, a detailed implementation plan will be made available to Regional Offices for use in compliance with this policy.

The BIA will conduct internal reviews of each Region no less than once every three years, and require follow up to any identified deficiencies.

5. Authority

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), 2009 Edition, issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), and 23 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Part 655 Subpart F.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- A. **Director, BIA** is responsible for the development of National Policy affecting Indian lands and issuing any changes to this policy.
- B. **Deputy Director, Field Operations, BIA** is responsible for oversight of this policy.
- C. **Deputy Director, Indian Services, BIA** is responsible for approving optional regional methods for compliance; and for developing an implementation plan to assist in prioritizing the field operations for the Regional Offices.
- D. **Regional Directors, BIA** are responsible for coordinating policy requirements with the MUTCD, and assuring that the requirements are incorporated into the scope of work requirements for all contracts for road maintenance, construction and reconstruction of BIA roads. In addition, Regional Directors are to provide technical assistance to tribes that have Tribally-owned roads. Regional Directors may, as appropriate, delegate these functions to Agency Superintendents or Regional Road Engineers.
- E. **Agency Superintendents and Regional Road Engineers, BIA** are, when delegated, responsible for coordinating policy requirements with the MUTCD, for tracking compliance within their region and for offering technical assistance to tribes that have Tribally-owned roads.

7. Approval



Michael Black
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

1/25/2012
Date