

# Dept. of Transportation: State, federal, tribal officials update partnership agreement

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Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized tribal governments met with state and federal officials today to update a commitment to partnership on transportation-related issues. The partnership agreement, initially launched in 2005, sets the framework for government-to-government cooperation on project development and labor issues that transcend state, federal and tribal jurisdictions.

"This agreement is about providing guidance and structure for us to enjoy a deeper and more meaningful understanding of our unique operational needs," said WisDOT Secretary-Designee Craig Thompson. "Our signatures today mark a new chapter in important relationships we want to continue cultivating for the benefit of our communities and future generations."

The partnership agreement has prompted initiatives among WisDOT and Wisconsin's tribal governments, such as the Inter-Tribal Task Force, annual consultation meetings and skills training programs in Native American communities.

"Good, strong partnerships take time, understanding and communication. For nearly 15 years, Wisconsin's 11 tribes have worked with state and federal government to advocate for transportation projects that leverage community impact," said Shannon Holsey, President of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council Inc. and President of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. "Expansion of the partnership agreement is another positive step forward for us all."

The partnership agreement followed Gov. Jim Doyle's Executive Order 39 in 2004. The agreement was last updated in fall 2010. Earlier this year, Gov. Tony Evers

issued Executive Order 18 reaffirming the importance of the inter-governmental relationships. Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes attended the signing event in Bayfield.

“Partnership is an important component of progress, and it’s exciting to see Native Nations and state and federal governments coming together to re-energize a core connection and chart a path forward,” said Lt. Gov. Barnes. “This partnership agreement embodies the spirit of Governor Evers’ Executive Order 18. As a state, we have the responsibility to uphold and respect tribal sovereignty—just as we have a responsibility to help Native communities overcome the barriers they face because of historical injustices.”