

## **The Promoting Access to Tribal Health, Wellbeing, and Youth Safety (PATHWAYS) Act**

*Introduced by Senators Tom Carper (D-Del.), Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.),  
Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.)*

**Summary:** The Promoting Access to Tribal Health, Wellbeing, and Youth Safety (PATHWAYS) Act would establish a new program at the U.S. Department of Transportation focused on reducing traffic-related pedestrian fatalities in Native American communities. The program will deploy pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure which will also help to improve public health in these communities suffering from disproportionately higher rates of diabetes and heart disease.

**Background:** According to the National Congress of American Indians, the roads owned and maintained by Tribal Nations and the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, [“are among the most underdeveloped, unsafe, and poorly maintained road networks in the nation.”](#) Many tribal communities have little or no access to transit services and must walk between and within their communities despite inadequate infrastructure for pedestrians. This severe disparity in critical surface infrastructure is contributing to disproportionately high road traffic fatality rates. In fact, American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are at higher risk of death due to issues of safety and health when compared nationally to other ethnic groups.

Unintentional injury, including [traffic-related fatalities](#), is the number one cause of death for AI/AN populations ages 1-44, and the third highest cause of death for AI/ANs of all ages. Meanwhile, AI/AN adults are almost three times more likely than non-Hispanic white adults to be [diagnosed with diabetes](#), and more than twice as likely than non-Hispanic whites to die from diabetes. The 5.2 million people in the U.S. self-identifying as AI/AN are 50 percent more likely to have [heart disease](#) than their white counterparts. Sadly, cardiovascular disease is the primary cause of AI/AN mortalities under the age of 65.

**Legislation:** Investments in infrastructure that improve safety and expand opportunity for non-motorized forms of transportation – such as sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and pedestrian and bicycle signals – can help to prevent road traffic fatalities and combat the prevalence of chronic heart disease throughout AI/AN communities. The PATHWAYS Act would codify specific authority to carry out project. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Allow for construction, planning and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure;
- Allow for construction, planning and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs;
- Allow for infrastructure-related projects to be carried out on any public road or any bicycle or pedestrian pathway or trail in the vicinity of schools; and,
- Authorize \$25 million annually for these activities.