



Plan For Ferry Across Lake Sakakawea

Published 09/22 2016 05:48PM Updated 09/22 2016 05:48PM When the U.S. decided to put dams on the Missouri River in the middle of the last century, the Three Affiliated Tribes took a major blow.

Much of the tribal land was flooded by the new Lake Sakakawea.

And the reservation itself was physically divided by the new body of water.

The original Four Bears Bridge connecting the southern reaches of the reservation with the rest of the tribal land was removed, forcing a 250 mile round trip for people wanting to get across.

But now there's a plan for a new crossing of the lake, near where the original Four Bears Bridge crossed the Missouri.

The idea is to establish a ferry to make regular trips from one shore to the other - west of White Shield.

That idea was presented to the public today in Parshall.

And those who've researched it say it's an idea whose time has come.

(Shirley Brentrup, Rural Economic Area Partnership) "When we first started this it seemed kind of a fun project - it would be fun to get on a big boat and go across the lake. But in reality we probably should have had it all along. There's over a 130 miles just from this point I'm at in Parshall today, to Twin Buttes - about 130 miles. There are many ferries that run just to cut off 52 miles."

(Ron Hall, MHA Nation Transportation Planning Project Manager) "It'll restore community connections that were severed when the dam was constructed. That's the big hope and expectation."

(Bob Youness, Ulteig Engineering) "It was a pretty exciting project to work on. We've been in constant contact with the different stakeholders in order to get their input and to come up with the study and the conclusions to the study."

The ferry project is estimated to cost about 16-and-a-half million dollars to bring into operation, with about 13-million paid by the federal government.

The rest would come from partners such as the MHA Nation, Corps of Engineers, State of North Dakota, smaller governments in the region, and other stakeholders who want to see it happen.

The idea next goes on to the tribal government for possible inclusion in a reservation-wide transportation plan that's under development.

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