FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives report regarding medical transport companies on the Navajo Nation

TÓ NANEES DIÍ, Ariz. – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report on Wednesday, regarding non-emergency medical transport companies operating on the Navajo Nation and concerns that are being raised by Navajo-owned transport companies and Navajo citizens.

Council Delegate Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K’ai’Bii’To, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) provided the report along with Priscilla Tallman, a Navajo citizen who operates the “Navajo Express” medical transport company in the Tuba City area.

Delegate Slim said that non-Navajo non-emergency medical transport companies are affecting Navajo transport businesses. There were reports of non-Navajo transport drivers that claim to have a partnership with Navajo companies in order to avoid applying for necessary licenses with the Navajo Nation.

“Navajo transport businesses are being threatened by outside entities. Currently, Navajo business owners are part of the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System program, which pays the owners to transport patients to clinics and hospitals, but outside companies are not being regulated and have increasingly begun to affect Navajo businesses,” said Delegate Slim.

According to the report, there is currently no policy or law that exists to regulate non-emergency medical transport businesses on the Navajo Nation, and reports of illegal driving behavior such as speeding and reckless driving have been reported by other transport drivers and citizens, as well as questionable maintenance of transport vehicles, said Delegate Slim.

HEHSC vice chair Council Delegate Norman M. Begay (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee) said he has received several complaints from his constituents regarding reckless driving of transport companies and the insurability of the vehicles.

“In New Mexico, there have been instances in which transport companies are either uninsured or are using their personal insurance and are not bonded – this is unacceptable,” said Delegate Begay. “The question now is how do we stop this?”
Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dízi) suggested to committee members that they begin drafting policies and regulations to address the issues with the medical transport companies.

“We need to regulate these businesses on the Navajo Nation. The safety of our Navajo people is very important and we need to monitor their services and driving,” said Delegate Tso. “We need to begin holding these transport companies accountable and hold them to higher standards.”

Delegate Tso said it was also important that transport drivers begin carrying credentials and proper uniform attire to identify themselves to their customers, and show proof of licenses, insurance, and are bonded. He added that they should also be required to possess basic first-aid skills such as CPR.

Delegate Slim said he would sponsor legislation to enforce regulation of non-emergency medical transport companies and their drivers to ensure safety of Navajo citizens, as well as to promote the growth of Navajo-owned transport businesses on the Navajo Nation.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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