



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2018

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Budget and Finance Committee receives update report regarding Navajo Nation road infrastructure projects

WINDOW ROCK – Last Thursday, the Budget and Finance Committee received an update report from the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation regarding financial and quarterly reports made to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Federal Highway Administration, and the Resources and Development Committee.

In 2012, the Navajo Nation entered into a Direct Federal Highway Funding Agreement with the U.S. Federal Highway Administration through Naabik'íyáti' Committee resolution NABID-91-12, which enabled the Nation to manage their own Tribal Transportation Program and administer highway infrastructure funding and projects.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs generally oversees the Tribal Transportation Program, however the agreement allows the Nation to assume all duties and functions of the program and the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation was delegated to develop a road maintenance schedule and listing of road infrastructure projects.

BFC member Council Delegate Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'Biit'ó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) raised concerns regarding the N20 road that begins at Gap and runs through LeChee that allows access to the city of Page, and was utilized when a part of Arizona Highway 89 collapsed.

“What happened to that road funding? It was for a permanent structure road in that area. When Highway 89 collapsed, it was used as an emergency road and was not conditioned for heavy traffic, and big trucks still use that road. It's ready for another chip-seal of the cracks,” said Delegate Slim.

Delegate Slim said the collapsed road area on Highway 89 has since been repaired, but due to heavy traffic on N20, it has resulted in road damages such as cracking and substantial wear-and-tear to the road. He recommended that the transportation division also carry out a road stabilization procedure to the N20 road.

According to the report, the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation gathered information and created a proposed \$3 billion road infrastructure package along with Navajo leadership, and reached out to congressional leaders in Feb. 2017. It states that the transportation package is a comprehensive plan that took several months to compile in hopes that it could be added to President Trump's proposed infrastructure stimulus plan.

BFC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) inquired about the backlog of the Tribal Transportation Program's road maintenance and construction projects, and questioned how the division would aid chapters with their road infrastructure projects.

"Part of your job should be to help out the chapters on the roads they are working on. I realize you devote little time to it, but how can you increase aid such as more time for chip sealing worn roads," said Delegate Tsosie, and added, "You guys also need to seriously fight against [Navajo] permittee's objections. It's crazy that one permittee can hold up a project—it is not their land. It belongs to everybody. Costs escalate while the project just sits there waiting."

Delegate Tsosie requested that the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation provide an update report to the Naabik'íyáti' Committee of the proposed Navajo Nation \$3 billion road infrastructure package and stated that Navajo leadership should have an opportunity to review the proposed road projects listing.

BFC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council