



Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. extends appreciation to Choice NTUA Wireless for Low Mountain cellular service set to go live Friday

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WINDOWROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) Choice Wireless telecommunications company, in coordination with Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Executive Director Christopher Becenti, notified 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain) that Low Mountain, Arizona residents are expected to receive cellular coverage for the first time this Friday, Jun. 26.

“I am excited for the community of Low Mountain Chapter to be able to utilize their phone services without leaving their home for the first time. The ultimate goal for Low Mountain and all 110 chapters is to have effective cell and broadband services.” said Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr.

The first-ever cellular and broadband coverage of the area is being made possible due to a cellular on wheels (COW) unit solution, which is a 4G mobile tower that can be deployed to areas lacking communications. Choice NTUA Wireless will operate the COW on the NTUA fiber internet network.

NTUA also reported that the company has just recently completed a fiber build to the Low Mountain Chapter House to deliver internet service to the building.

The COW employs all of the technologies to deliver 4G LTE data to mobile phones and to deliver fixed wireless broadband internet access inside homes. It will have voice technologies that will enable Choice NTUA Wireless, Verizon, Sprint, AT&T and T-Mobile customers in the area to have service.

“Our goal has always been to get our coverage into the Low Mountain area. But we always seemed to hit roadblocks,” said Velena Tsosie, deputy general manager of Choice NTUA Wireless. “Once the severity of the pandemic was known, Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. and Christopher Becenti, the executive director of the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, implored us to find a solution for the people in Low Mountain. It has taken us a couple of months, but we are now honored that we will be able to provide these services.”

The coordinated efforts of Delegate Begay, Director Becenti and the Choice NTUA Wireless team to create access in the Low Mountain area were based on the growing importance of supporting distance learning, online courses, family checkups, telehealth, public safety and emergency services and more during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

“Our intent is to keep this COW in Low Mountain until a permanent solution can be built,” said Tsosie.

Historically, permanent solutions were hampered by the involvement of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the rights-of-way land access process. Recently, the Resources and Development Committee of the 24th Navajo Nation Council adopted new tribal access authorization rules that streamline infrastructure projects on Navajo Nation land. The new rules will help future infrastructure projects relating to fiber and other utilities.

“The Navajo Nation still has a long road to accomplish the intended purpose,” said Delegate Begay. He continued to advocate for additional funds from the Navajo Nation government to make the COW permanent with a cell tower to enable even greater access in the surrounding Low Mountain area.

“I thank the NTUA and all those who were involved in making this happen,” added Delegate Begay.

A socially-distanced ribbon cutting for the COW unit will be held Friday at 10 a.m. at the Low Mountain Chapter. The event will mark the powering-on of the unit and will officially place the site “on-air.”

Director Becenti is a member of the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Native Nations Communications Task Force representing the Navajo Nation. Since Mar. 31, the task force has provided wireless solutions to first responders and students in remote communities. Their supporting role helps tribal governments and local communities with guidance and technical expertise to improve broadband access.

Choice NTUA Wireless is a facilities-based carrier launched in 2014 and is majority Navajo-owned. The company provides growing 4G LTE fixed/mobile broadband and voice service across the Navajo Nation.

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MEDIA CONTACTS: nnlb.communications@gmail.com, (928) 287-2085

Byron C. Shorty, INT Communications Director

Timothy E. Benally, Public Information Officer

Isabella S. Robbins, Staff Writer