



Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. advocates for road and broadband projects with Arizona leaders

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PHOTO: Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. met with Arizona Representative Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren and former Arizona State Senator Carlyle Begay at the Arizona State Capitol Building.

PHOENIX — On Friday, 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain) met with Arizona State and Hopi Tribal leadership to discuss funding priorities for road projects, rural broadband and housing development in the state's upcoming 2022 fiscal year budget.

"I appreciate this multi-government effort and the individuals here taking the time to join Navajo and Hopi leadership in addressing these long-overdue priorities," said Begay. "I believe we can really get these projects done for both tribes here."

During the meetings, Begay primarily advocated for Hopi Route 60 (H60) and asked how state and county funding could supplement needed improvements.

The 13.5-mile H60, which is a federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) route, begins on the southern end in Polacca on Hopi Tribal land and connects to the Navajo Route 65 (N65) paved surface road in the Navajo community of Low Mountain.

According to the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), the road has remained on both Navajo and Hopi project priority lists since 1963. H60 continues to see an average of 495 daily travelers and gets washed out every two years, on average.



PHOTO: Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. met with Arizona Governor Doug Ducey's Policy Advisor Ben Blink at the Arizona State Capitol Building.

Since the H60 project lies outside the Navajo Nation's boundaries, funding opportunities for improvements to the road remain limited under recent federal aid packages related to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

While meeting with Rep. Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, D-07, Begay was joined by Hopi Tribal Council Member Wallace Youvella, Jr. and former Hopi Tribal Chairman Ivan Sydney who both indicated new letters of support for the H60 project would be provided.

Sydney added, "I think it is important for both nations to work together on this and I am glad to reconnect with this movement once again."

Rep. Blackwater-Nygren began addressing Arizona State Representative Arlando Teller's bill for the H60 project after she was appointed to fill his seat. That bill, House Bill 2215, calls for a \$35 million state appropriation to support the route improvement.

"I am humbled to be meeting with two nations here today in order to make sure that we can continue to help as best we can from the state level," added Rep. Blackwater-Nygren.

During a meeting with Governor Doug Ducey's policy advisor Ben Blink, Begay advocated for smart highway corridors for roadways on and near the Navajo Nation. Recently, the Navajo Nation Council has heard from technology and broadband partners regarding opportunities to expand broadband access to the Navajo Nation and similar projects.

Blink informed Begay that Governor Ducey's office is reviewing Rep. Regina Cobb's House Bill 2596, which requires the Arizona Broadband Office creating a priority list for installing broadband conduit across Arizona.

Blink added, “This strategic plan will help us figure out the best possible plan for private and commercial communications to develop.”

As far as road projects, Blink also indicated H60 and US Route 191, which traverses the Navajo Nation, are on the ADOT priority list, “From the government’s standpoint the Navajo Nation is really critical. It would not be a success if we did not connect those communities.”

Begay indicated he is looking forward to working with Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizi) and the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission to continue advocating for these projects and to build more support moving forward.

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