



Navajo Nation Roads Summit hosted by Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie, Infrastructure Projects Highlighted

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CHURCH ROCK, N.M. — This week, Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie of the 24th Navajo Nation Council brought together chapter, county, and state officials for a Navajo Nation Roads Summit to address dilapidated roadways across the eastern agency in northwestern New Mexico.

“Our communities in the Eastern Agency of the Navajo Nation need new and improved roads for our families that travel long miles just to get their essential items during this pandemic,” said Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Church Rock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau). “Our chapters comprise multiple jurisdictions of state, private, allotment, and county land in New Mexico that require coordination with multiple entities just to get our roads paved and upgraded. The Roads Summit is an opportunity for chapter officials to share more about possible road improvements that need to be completed and for state leaders to share more about how the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill signed by President Biden this week will help our communities.”

President Joe Biden signed the bipartisan infrastructure bill into law that will deliver \$550 billion in new federal investments across the country in the span of five years for bridges, roads, broadband connections, water, and new energy systems.

In a statement from President Jonathan Nez, he said: “It is important for local leaders, community members, and stakeholders to learn the rights-of-way process and establish partnerships for road improvements. With the American Rescue Plan Act, we are looking to allocate more funding for road projects. It is great to see today that many of our local governments are getting prepared for more infrastructure projects in the future.”

The infrastructure bill includes transportation projects for Indian Country that will address long standing inequities for safety improvements to upgrade roads, bridges, and transit systems for tribal communities around the country.



PHOTO: Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie and his Legislative District Assistant, Barbara O'Keefe during the Navajo Nation Roads Summit at Fire Rock Casino.

“The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is historic for many reasons, including its investments that will deliver better, safer transportation infrastructure in Indian Country,” said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. “My Department looks forward to working closely with our Tribal partners on a range of infrastructure projects that create good jobs, protect our environment, and build a foundation for economic opportunity that will last for generations.”

The \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill includes the following for the Navajo Nation:

- Establishment of the Office of Tribal Government Affairs
- \$3 billion for the Tribal Transportation Program
- \$1 billion in dedicated bridge investments for tribal lands
- \$229 million for tribal transit projects with the Federal Transit Administration
- Eligibility for USDOT’s new \$6 billion Safe Streets and Roads for All competitive grant program
- Elevation of Tribal Government Affairs leadership to the rank of Assistant Secretary within the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)

“Over 14,000 or more miles of roads expand across the Navajo Nation and this includes 6,000 Bureau of Indian Affairs roadways,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). “Over \$11 billion in new infrastructure projects will be funded around Indian Country to begin construction on broadband internet lines, roadways, bridges, and water pipelines. We commend the leadership of Delegate Yazzie for his advocacy for our chapters in the Eastern Agency to improve our roads.”

State Representative Wanda Johnson, Gallup Mayor Louie Bonagudi, Vice President Myron Lizer, the Navajo Land Department, BIA representatives, and the Navajo Division of Transportation were present at the summit.

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