



## Resources and Development Committee meet with Transportation Deputy Assistant Secretary Arlando Teller to discuss Road Projects

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**PHOTO:** Vice President Myron Lizer, Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr., and Chairman Rickie Nez participate in roundtable discussion concerning road infrastructure projects and funding from the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

**WASHINGTON, D.C. —** Yesterday, members of the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council was joined by Vice President Myron Lizer for a roundtable meeting with Deputy Assistant Secretary Arlando Teller from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) to discuss road infrastructure projects and funding from the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

In November, President Joe Biden signed into law the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that delivers \$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.

“We appreciate the leadership of Assistant Secretary Arlando Teller and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttiege for being champions for Indian Country as we work to upgrade our roads and bridges. Tribal Nations will get over \$11 million in new infrastructure projects to begin construction on broadband internet lines, roadways, bridges, and water pipelines. Our meeting today was a clear example of the nation to nation relationship we must have with the federal government. The Navajo Nation Council commends our Congressional representatives and President Biden for making the largest investment in history to the Navajo Nation,” said Chairman Rickie Nez (T’iistsoh Sikaad, Nenahnezad, Upper Fruitland, Tsé Daa K’aan, Newcomb, San Juan).

RDC Vice Chairman Thomas Walker Jr., Council Delegate Mark Freeland, Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr., and Delegate Herman Daniels Jr. were joined by Navajo Nation Transportation Division Director Garrett Silversmith for the roundtable discussion.

“We appreciate Secretary Pete Buttiege for his leadership in making the needs of our tribal communities a top priority. Our roads and airports on the Navajo Nation are the lifeline of emergency medical personnel, our frontline workers, and our families who travel long distances for essential items. During this pandemic, we have witnessed the importance of having upgraded airport runways and roads to keep our communities connected and safe,” said Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint).

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. recently met with Secretary Pete Buttiege during his visit throughout the southwest promoting the bipartisan infrastructure law at Mesa Community College.

“In November, the Navajo Nation Council sent an official invitation to Secretary Buttiege to visit the Navajo Nation and to see for himself the conditions of our roads, bridges, and airport runways. Today, we heard from the U.S. Transportation Department about new investments that will be made towards Navajo transit and our airport infrastructure. This pandemic has shown us the importance of our roads that are traveled daily by hundreds of Navajo families that need groceries, fire wood, and other essential items. We will hold the federal agencies accountable to ensure they meet their trust responsibility to Indian Country,” said Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain).

Deputy Assistant Secretary Teller provided a briefing to the committee on the historic levels of funding for transportation projects across Indian Country to improve roads, bridges, and transit systems on tribal land.

“Secretary Buttiege continues to respect the tribal consultation process, and our focus is on innovating our roadways and for construction to begin across Indian Country. We look forward to working with the Navajo Nation to ensure roads are upgraded and new infrastructure projects create good jobs. Our tribal partners are a top priority for the Biden Administration and the infrastructure bill is a reflection of this. We appreciate the opportunity to join the Resources and Development Committee to discuss ways our collaboration will uplift our tribal communities,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary Arlando Teller.

Vice President Myron Lizer shared the importance of enhancing roadways across the Navajo Nation and how the new funding can rebuild communities. “Our mission is making sure the Navajo Nation is competitive with the rest of the world, as we utilize infrastructure funds to construct new roads and bridges in our rural areas. Together, we are capable of sharing solutions with the federal government to solve the problems impacting the livelihood of the Navajo people. The Executive Branch appreciates the invitation by Chairman Rickie Nez and the Navajo Nation Council to advocate for our priorities to the White House and Congress.”

The USDOT reported that \$270 million will be used to improve Bureau of Indian Affairs roads and bridges, and over \$150 million to be invested into high priority projects in the next five years.

In a prepared statement, Secretary Pete Buttigieg added that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is historic because it includes investments that will deliver better, safer transportation infrastructure in Indian Country. “The transportation 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.”

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