



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee holds work session on the Navajo Nation Road Fund Management Plan and regulations



NDOT Division Director Tom Platero (left) holds up a aerial map of proposed road projects for Vice-Chair Casey Allen Johnson (center) and RDC Chair Brenda Jesus (right).

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Friday, Oct. 11, the Navajo Division of Transportation (NDOT) provided a report to the Resources and Development Committee (RDC), outlining updates and revisions to the Navajo Nation Road Fund Management Plan and regulations.

NDOT presented Road Fund Management Plan revisions that address streamlining road project funding, improving oversight, and addressing concerns regarding the quality of road maintenance projects across the Navajo Nation.

NDOT also presented a strategy for enhancing transparency and accountability in the use of fuel excise tax (FET) funds.

NDOT proposed amendments to the Road Fund Management Plan, including updated language to reflect the current organizational structure of the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation. These changes will replace outdated references to the Division of Community Development with the standalone Department of Transportation. NDOT Division Director Tom Platero indicated that the amendments would be submitted for legislative approval within the next three weeks.

A comprehensive review of the Navajo Nation Road Fund Regulations was also presented. NDOT has condensed the previous regulatory framework to five pages, improving clarity to application. The updated regulations will feature clearer definitions of public and private roads and will introduce a new priority rating system for FET-funded road projects. This system aims to ensure that critical road maintenance and improvement projects are identified and prioritized based on community needs and road usage.

The RDC and NDOT discussed the creation of a priority rating system that will be used to evaluate and rank road projects for FET funding. The rating system, which NDOT plans to complete within the next month and a half, will serve as a critical tool in determining which road projects should be prioritized based on factors such as safety, accessibility, and overall impact on the community.

The presenters discussed plans to develop a road maintenance and improvement monitoring policy, expected to be completed within the next three months. This policy will ensure that all phases of road construction and maintenance are monitored closely for quality control and compliance. NDOT emphasized the importance of aligning project outcomes with the expectations set by both the department and the community.

As part of its efforts to increase transparency, NDOT committed to providing quarterly reports to the RDC on all active FET-funded road projects. These reports will include project status updates, financial allocations, and any significant developments or delays. The first report is expected by December of this year, which will also include a detailed breakdown of active and inactive projects.

Addressing concerns about long-standing, inactive projects, Platero indicated that the division is reviewing older projects to determine whether they should be reauthorized or closed. The RDC recommended that projects that have remained inactive for up to 20 years, should either be reallocated or reassessed to ensure that FET funds are being used effectively.

Concerns were voiced about the quality of certain road projects, specifically the deteriorating conditions on Route 27. responded by committing to field visits and discussions with contractors, including the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority (NECA), to assess the issues and determine necessary repairs. NDOT emphasized that ensuring the safety and durability of roads is a top priority and that contractors will be held accountable for their work.

“The Navajo Nation gives millions of dollars towards road construction,” said Brenda Jesus “We need to set standards on the quality and longevity of work.”

The work session produced a clear path forward for addressing the Navajo Nation’s transportation infrastructure needs. By improving road fund management, developing a transparent project prioritization system, and enhancing oversight, the committee wanted to ensure that future road projects meet the highest standards of safety, quality, and community impact.

Legislation for the proposed amendments to the Road Fund Management Plan and regulations is expected to be introduced in the coming months. The Resource and Development Committee expressed support for the department’s efforts and looks forward to continued collaboration in addressing the Nation’s transportation challenges.