



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 23, 2025

Naa'bik'iyati' Committee advances confirmation of Tom Platero as Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation



Naabik'iyáti' Committee approved legislation 0177-25, confirmation of Tom Platero as Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Thursday, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee voted to advance the confirmation of Tom Platero as Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation (NDOT). The final confirmation now rests with the full Navajo Nation Council.

During the hearing, council delegates raised concerns that underscored the urgency of improving the Nation's roads, bridges, and transportation systems. Their questions reflected both accountability for past challenges and expectations for stronger leadership moving forward.

Co-sponsor of the legislation, Council Delegate Danny Simpson, voiced support for Platero, pointing to his track record of moving projects forward and his commitment to accountability. "We need leadership that can balance planning with results," said Delegate Simpson. "Tom Platero has demonstrated that he can complete projects promptly, and with his confirmation, I believe NDOT will deliver the roads and infrastructure our people deserve."

Delegate Vince R. James addressed longstanding project delays and community frustrations. He raised concerns about politically driven priorities, compliance with federal audits, and the dismissal of veterans from the division. James stressed that critical projects such as the N-15 corridor and unsafe bridges in his region could not afford further setbacks.

“Our communities are tired of excuses,” Delegate James said. “We need action on the ground, not just talk in meetings.”

Delegate Dr. Andy Nez questioned the consistency of leadership at NDOT and emphasized the need for continuity. He noted that frequent changes in directors disrupt project timelines and confuse communities waiting for updates, especially with multiple projects in Upper District 18.

“Our communities have been waiting for years, and every time a director changes, it feels like we start all over again,” Delegate Dr. Nez said. He pressed Platero to provide stable leadership and direct service to local chapters, particularly on road assessments and pending projects with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Delegate Otto Tso highlighted compliance and federal highway program oversight, reminding Platero that multimillion-dollar projects come with accountability expectations. Delegate Tso emphasized that NDOT must align its work with both the Navajo Nation and federal standards to ensure that funding is not jeopardized.

Delegate Eugenia Charles Newton pointed to the Nation’s difficulties with right-of-way clearances and compliance issues. She stressed that federal funds come with strict conditions and urged Platero to strengthen oversight to avoid further audit findings and project delays.

Other delegates added their voices of concern and expectation. They questioned how NDOT will handle compliance issues that have delayed projects, manage audits that have placed millions of dollars in jeopardy, and address urgent road safety needs such as those identified along New Mexico Highway 602.

Delegate Curtis Yanito raised concerns about strained agreements with counties and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, recalling that past arrangements had resulted in faster progress before NDOT’s involvement complicated processes.

“We need to restore trust with our partners and find a way to move projects without unnecessary delays,” Yanito said.

In response, Platero acknowledged the depth of challenges but highlighted progress under his leadership, including seven completed projects in 18 months compared to 11 in the prior 11 years. Platero said he intends to bring consistency, accountability, and stronger partnerships to NDOT’s work.

With the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee’s vote of 15 in favor and two opposed, the matter now advances to the full Navajo Nation Council, which holds final authority on the confirmation.

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