



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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25th Navajo Nation Council advances dialogue on N15 corridor improvements following public hearing



Members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council join community members at a public hearing to discuss safety, funding, and progression of the N15 roadway improvement project.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council participated in a public hearing on Dec. 10 at Cornfields Chapter to receive project updates and community testimony regarding the proposed reconstruction of Navajo Route N15, a critical transportation corridor serving communities from Cornfields through Burnside and Sunrise.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chair Vince R. James emphasized that timely advancement of the project is necessary to prevent further cost escalation and to strengthen the Navajo Nation's position when seeking future infrastructure funding.

"N15 is more than a local roadway. It is a lifeline that supports emergency response, school transportation, commerce and access to health care across multiple regions," said Delegate James.

James noted that the Navajo Nation Council has actively pursued federal resources to address the deteriorating condition of the corridor and will continue urging transportation agencies to fully utilize existing funding. He added that demonstrating progress is essential to justifying additional investments.

During the hearing, officials from the Navajo Department of Transportation (Navajo DOT), along with engineers, environmental specialists, chapter officials, school representatives and community members, discussed project costs, design elements, environmental compliance requirements and funding limitations.

Navajo DOT Principal Civil Engineer Darryl Bradley presented updated engineering estimates that reflect rising construction costs driven by inflation, material availability and enhanced safety standards. Bradley reported that both Segment One and Segment Two are now estimated to exceed \$40 million each, resulting in an anticipated funding gap even with the use of Tribal Transportation Program funds and a recently awarded federal RAISE grant. Final costs, he noted, will not be determined until contractor bids are opened, underscoring the importance of advancing the project without further delay.

Proposed design improvements prioritize safety and long-term durability. Plans include widened travel lanes, expanded shoulders, elevated roadway profiles in flood-prone areas, improved drainage systems, rumble strips, upgraded pavement striping and enhanced signage. Engineers also outlined measures to stabilize washes, protect culverts from sediment buildup and accommodate increased heavy truck traffic, as N15 has become a primary access route into the interior of the Navajo Nation.

Environmental and cultural compliance remains a critical component of the project. Project consultants reported ongoing coordination with the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department and other relevant agencies to complete cultural resource data recovery, biological assessments and federal environmental clearances. These requirements must be satisfied prior to construction and are being pursued concurrently to minimize delays.

Delegate Brenda Jesus emphasized testimony from community members, educators and chapter leaders who identified safety as the foremost concern. She cited issues affecting school bus routes, pedestrian safety near school campuses, livestock crossings and emergency access during severe weather. Jesus stated that the Council will continue working with Navajo DOT, federal partners and local chapters to align funding strategies with community priorities and ensure infrastructure investments directly protect families and future generations.

Community members voiced strong support for the project, describing decades of roadway deterioration, frequent accidents, vehicle damage and hazardous driving conditions during rain and snow. Speakers also called for coordination with schools, transit providers and law enforcement to address speed management, pullouts and safe crossings in high-traffic areas.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council stated that while funding challenges remain, improvements to Navajo Route N15 represent a long-term investment in public safety, mobility and economic access for communities across the Navajo Nation.

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