



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Navajo Utah Commission demands proactive measures to address road maintenance delays



Navajo Utah Commission members Herman Farley (left), Delegate Curtis Yanito (center), and Kenny Victor (right) address road maintenance funding delays affecting the northern regions of Navajo Nation.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Tuesday, the Navajo Utah Commission (NUC) convened with the Navajo Division of Transportation (NDOT) to implement a series of proactive measures to resolve long-standing road maintenance funding delays affecting San Juan County, Utah, and several other counties. The commission voiced concerns about the adequacy of the proposed solutions, highlighting persistent disparities in road services and the need for greater transparency and accountability.

“Securing federal funding is a long and complex process,” said Delegate Curtis Yanito. “Even if we do get more funding, will it be used efficiently? Without a detailed plan for how funds will be allocated and managed, there’s no guarantee that improvements will happen.”

Navajo DOT confirmed that \$300,000 is owed to San Juan County for road maintenance services rendered through March 2024, with an additional \$80,000 due for the current fiscal year. NDOT attributed the delays of expenditure to budget constraints, procedural hurdles, and missed contract deadlines.

The Commission and officials of the southern region expressed concerns over unpaved and poorly maintained roads, which hinder access to schools, healthcare, and other essential services.

“We’re committed to providing equitable services across all regions of our community,” said Commissioner Herman Farley. “The current state of our roads is unacceptable, and we’re grateful that NDOT is taking proactive measures to resolve this.”

Navajo DOT outlined a comprehensive plan to address the ongoing issues, focusing on streamlining processes to prevent future delays, improving collaborations with the BIA and county officials, and advocating for increased federal funding. The division also emphasized the need to clarify road ownership definitions and reassess internal resources that take into consideration allocations to ensure equitable distribution of resources across all regions. Each of the funding sources available to NDOT comes with its own laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. Once developed, these measures are intended to enhance transparency, accelerate payments, and improve overall road maintenance services throughout the affected areas.

“We recognize the frustration caused by these delays,” said Tom Platero, NDOT Executive Director. “We are now working closely with our financial and contract teams to ensure the necessary payments are made quickly. The council’s approval of the full budget will allow us to address this immediately.”

NDOT is working to clarify road ownership definitions and improve communication with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and county officials. The department aims to secure additional federal funding and reassess internal resource allocation to better meet the region’s growing infrastructure needs.

Despite these assurances, NUC members raised concerns about the feasibility of the proposed solutions and the Navajo Nation’s ability to follow through on its commitments.

“While NDOT’s intention to clear outstanding payments is appreciated, we need more than just promises,” said Aneth Chapter Vice-President Billy Todachennie. “We’ve been hearing these same assurances for years without any tangible results. The community needs action, not just plans.”

The Navajo Utah Commission underscored that jurisdictional issues between the Navajo Nation and BIA have long been used as an excuse for delayed action. Others questioned whether additional federal funding would be managed effectively, given previous challenges.

In response, the Navajo Department of Transportation pledged to strengthen communication with local stakeholders and to work collaboratively to address these issues.

“These steps are just the beginning,” Delegate Yantio added. “We are dedicated to improving our roads and ensuring that residents, regardless of location, have safe and reliable access to transportation.”

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