



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 26, 2020

Garret Silversmith
NDOT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
gsilversmith@navajodot.org
(505) 371-8300

Mihio Manus
SR. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
mmanus@navajodot.org
(505) 371-8356

NDOT PARTNERS WITH SAN JUAN COUNTY UTAH ON IGA TO CONTINUE ROAD MAINTENANCE



President Jonathan Nez, second from lower left, was joined by representatives from San Juan County Utah, NDOT, and the 24th Navajo Nation Council when he signed an IGA to continue road maintenance on Navajo roads in San Juan County Utah.

TEEC NOS POS CHAPTER - On Monday, February 24, the Navajo Nation entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with San Juan County Utah to partner on road maintenance, snow removal and flood repair services for 74 miles of Navajo Nation roads within San Juan County Utah.

The agreement, which was signed at the Teec Nos Pos Chapter by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and San Juan County Utah Commission Chairman Kenneth Maryboy, identifies 14 routes in the Western and Northern Navajo Agencies that are located within San Juan County Utah.

The signing of the IGA took several months to formulate. Navajo Division of Transportation (NDOT) Executive Director Garret Silversmith said that NDOT and the County prioritized roads that were school bus routes and that provided access to critical services.

“Today’s signing ceremony is very significant. NDOT has been working with the County on getting this IGA in place over the past six months,” Silversmith said. “We’ve heard

the requests of the community and we needed to establish road maintenance out here. This IGA will assure that maintenance is continued throughout the year and during the critical winter months.”

At the signing ceremony, President Nez spoke about the regional meetings that his office coordinated to hear the concerns of Navajo/Utah communities. The president said that having the chapters work directly with the County and the Executive Branch was an example of self-reliance where progress was made based on community input.

“I appreciate the County being a part of this discussion. This IGA is a partnership not a handout,” he said. “We need to work together to continue services like road maintenance within these communities. We need to do this by re-instilling self-reliance into our Navajo communities.”

The president also thanked the San Juan County Commission for working together with the Nation to move this agreement forward.



NDOT Executive Director Garret Silversmith spoke about how the proposed road between Navajo Mountain and Oljato would shorten the route between the communities and strengthen access for public safety and first responders.

“I’m proud of the partnership that the Navajo Nation has built with San Juan County Utah to provide road services that will benefit our students by improving school bus routes, and roads that are used by first responders, our elderly people, and many others on a daily basis.”

San Juan County Utah Administrator Mack McDonald said his staff had been meeting with NDOT to solve the public’s concerns at the chapter level.

“This is one way that we’ve come up with to immediately affect maintenance,” McDonald said.

The IGA collaboratively brings NDOT and the County together to continue maintenance on the identified school bus routes to provide safer rides and prevent busses from getting stuck in the mud.

“We all recognized that there was a safety concern here and this agreement will help solve this,” he said.

24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Charlaine Tso, who represents the majority of Navajo/Utah Chapters affected by the IGA, attended the signing.

“Road maintenance is a big issue out here. I’ve gotten so many correspondences regarding the roads and how they’ve remained unmaintained. There are elderly using these roads and youth who need to get to school,” Delegate Tso said. “This agreement grants San Juan County Utah the necessary authorization to continue road maintenance on the roads identified within the IGA. “

Tso said she is looking at more collaborations with San Juan County Utah in the near future to move projects forward that require IGAs or Memorandum of Agreements.

Before the signing, Navajo/Utah Chapters were given a presentation on the proposed development of a new highway that would connect the communities of Navajo Mountain and Oljato to provide a shorter route for residents while creating community and economic development opportunities.

The proposed highway is a 30-mile stretch near the Utah-Arizona border that is estimated to cost \$115 million dollars. The scope of work includes drainage, subgrade, bridge construction, right-of-way fencing, signage and new pavement.

“If this dirt road is paved it will create an improved route for thousands of tourists that visit Monument Valley and other nearby attractions,” President Nez said. “With the partnership of the Navajo Nation, the state of Utah, and San Juan County, we look forward to the construction of this highway, which would serve as a critical corridor for tourism to help create jobs, businesses, and revenues.”

For their efforts in pushing this IGA forward, NDOT would like to thank the staff of San Juan County Utah, San Juan County Administrator Mack McDonald, former San Juan County Utah Public Works Director Ben Musselman, San Juan County Commissioners, the Office of the President and Vice President, and the 24th Navajo Nation Council.

###