



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Council Delegate Duane Tsinigine holds press conference to provide update on U.S. Highway 89**

Window Rock – On Tuesday afternoon, Council Delegate Duane Tsinigine (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K’ai’Bii’To, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) held a press conference to provide an update on the closure of U.S. Highway 89 south of Page, Ariz.

“I am in the process of communicating with Arizona U.S. Representative Ann Kirkpatrick and her staff in order to request funding from Washington D.C.” said Delegate Tsinigine. “When an emergency declaration is made, we are also asking for funding quickly.”

On Feb. 24, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly officially signed an emergency declaration on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

Recent amendments to the Stafford Act allow tribes to seek funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency directly from the U.S. President without going through the state.

Ben Bennett, Navajo Division of Transportation deputy director, explained that funding would be used to reimburse some of the costs involved in grading, building up, and perhaps graveling alternative roads.

Residents in the locally affected area have had to find alternate routes to school and work. School buses and ambulances also have to make longer commutes.

Navajo Route 20, a 28-mile stretch of dirt road from Bodaway/Gap to Coppermine has taken on increased traffic since the damage occurred to U.S. 89.

“N-20 usually receives 100 vehicles a day. U.S. 89 receives about 3,100 vehicles a day,” said Bennett, explaining that the current condition of N-20 is not fit to take on heavy traffic.

N-20 has been on the NDOT’s pavement priority list for years.

“Even if Highway 89 wasn’t in jeopardy, the community still needs it paved,” said Delegate Tsinigine. “So, hopefully, this will be a positive impact in terms of getting it paved.”

Bennett advised Delegate Tsinigine to remain cautious until ADOT makes their recommendations, “It depends what they find and the cost of fixing U.S. 89 at its present location.”

On Wednesday, a meeting between ADOT, Coconino County, BIA, and NDOT took place in Flagstaff to determine alternatives, discuss worst and best case scenarios, and determine funding sources.

“We have the people on our conscience, and this needs to be fixed,” said Delegate Tsinigine.

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