



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee recommends approval of referendum measure for transportation stimulus plan

WINDOW ROCK – Last Friday, the Budget and Finance Committee considered Legislation No. 0241-16, which seeks to refer a referendum measure to Navajo citizens to vote on the proposed expenditure of the fund principle from the Navajo Nation Permanent Trust Fund in the amount of approximately \$180 million for a Transportation Stimulus Plan.

According to the legislation, the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation developed the stimulus plan, which would allocate \$36 million annually over the span of five years to fund non-paved road improvements across the Navajo Nation.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinõn, Whippoorwill) said the proposed Transportation Stimulus Plan would provide 20-miles of non-paved road improvements in each of the 24 regions totaling 480-miles, which would be divided equally by the number of chapters in each region.

“We need to get more money for roads and it’s expensive because it’s a constant issue, however, people use the roads every day—it’s a necessity. I believe people will vote for this because they’ll see the potential of road improvement in their communities,” said Delegate Witherspoon.

Delegate Witherspoon added that improving the roads would promote economic development and create jobs resulting from new road construction projects, as well as providing improved access to community areas that primarily rely on unmaintained, unpaved roads.

For the referendum measure to pass, it would require two-thirds majority approval by registered Navajo voters. In accordance with Navajo Nation law, the Navajo Nation Council must place a referendum on the ballot of any general or special election for Navajo citizens to determine whether or not to expend the principle amount from the Permanent Trust Fund

In support of the legislation, BFC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said the Transportation Stimulus Plan allows for much needed road improvements for the Navajo Nation, which is primarily comprised of unpaved roads.

“Parents have to use these bad roads every day. These poor parents are getting stuck in mud or even have to walk out to the road to pick up their kids from the bus stop and sometimes the buses get stuck and that’s a whole other problem,” said Delegate Tsosie. “The bad roads are also the cause for ruining vehicles because of sharp rocks and poorly maintained roads.”

Delegate Tsosie also raised concerns regarding the road project listing for each community, noting that some communities were not included in the listing. He recommended a directive to have the NNDOT revise the listing and submit the correct information before it moves forward to the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee for consideration.

BFC members voted 4-0 to approve Legislation No. 0241-16, with one directive. The legislation moves forward to the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee for consideration, and the Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for the bill.

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