



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee supports Nageezi community's efforts to reduce the speed limit of U.S. Route 550

WINDOW ROCK – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee considered Legislation No. 0324-18, which seeks the Navajo Nation's support of the Nageezi Chapter request to the New Mexico Department of Transportation to reduce the speed limit of certain sections of U.S. Route 550, which is a four-lane highway that extends from Bernalillo, N.M. to Montrose, C.O., and aligns with the Navajo communities of Nageezi, Huerfano, and Counselor.

Nageezi Chapter resolution #NC 18-043 requests NMDOT to reduce the speed limit from 70-mph to 55-mph between mile markers 126 to 128 and mile markers 112 to 116.

Council Delegate Jonathan L. Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels), who sponsored the legislation, asked for the committee's support to assist the Nageezi Chapter and surrounding communities with efforts to keep commuters safe on the highway.

"The community is requesting Navajo leadership to provide a statement to NMDOT to address the safety, health, and welfare of the communities. Route 550 has a high volume of diesel traffic throughout the day and it is evident that these diesel trucks drive at the highest speed. Having high-speed highways in the middle of rural communities is not safe," stated Delegate Hale.

According to Etta Arviso, a concerned Nageezi community member, the Dzilh-na-o-dith-hle Community School, Dzilh-na-o-dith-hle Health Center, Nageezi Senior Center, Nageezi Head Start program, Nageezi Veterans Office, U.S. Postal Office, Navajo Housing Authority housing complexes, and other community facilities are located within 100-feet of the highway.

"Community leadership and members have made numerous attempts to NMDOT to reduce the speed limit, however, we have not received any responses regarding our concerns," added Arviso.

The chapter resolution also states that the highway has a high volume of auto accident fatalities and local pedestrians are vulnerable to being struck by vehicles along Route 550.

RDC member Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock), who represents the community of Nageezi, said that highway safety has been a high priority for years.

“Community members should feel safe to get from one place to another. In Nageezi, if a Navajo elder wants to visit their grandchild at school and eat at the senior center later in the afternoon, they would have to cross the highway to get to one building to another. It becomes very dangerous if an elder is trying to cross the highway with vehicles going over 65-mile per hour. The current speed limit hinders the safety of the communities,” said Delegate Perry.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0324-18 with a 4-0 vote. The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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