

Permission to survey, ROW clearances needed for N20 paving



A technical meeting regarding the proposed paving of Navajo Route 20 as an interim detour to restore essential traffic from U.S. 89 was held at the Arizona Department of Transportation Holbrook office on March 25. The Navajo Division of Transportation and Bureau of Indian Affairs team discussed permission to survey and right-of-way clearances required before construction can begin. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

HOLBROOK-The Navajo Division of Transportation met with the Arizona Department of Transportation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs on March 25 to move forward with plans to pave Navajo Route 20 as a detour route to restore essential traffic from the road closure on U.S. 89.

ADOT has been allowed the use of Federal Highway Administration emergency relief funding to pave N20 and to open up the route as soon as possible for traffic.

However, before construction can begin, a number of items must be addressed, such as detour design standards, speed, traffic volume, commercial truck traffic, drainage, and livestock provisions.

Other items needed by ADOT include application for a

temporary easement for the N20 detour route, updating the 2006 environmental assessment and biological evaluation, a cultural resource survey, and acquisition of all necessary permits and clearances from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

ADOT will assume the

In the interest of time, ADOT plans on utilizing the existing alignment of N20 to expedite the construction process.

We are staying with the current dirt road alignment, Hammit said.

Roland Becenti, acting division manager for the BIA

survey work with the legal descriptions is going to take some time," Becenti said.

ADOT right-of-way agent Myra Rothman said they must have a meets and bounds legal description in place before applying for the temporary easement.

Hammit asked if it was possible to get permitting to begin design and possibly even construction, while surveying activities were executed.

"(We) could have it as a deliverable to the (Navajo Nation) Land Department within 60 to 90 days after construction is complete. That would be the complete survey and monumentation," Hammit said.

NDOT civil engineer Darryl Bradley said they can request submission of a map with a general layout of the existing

“ The survey work with the legal descriptions is going to take some time. ”

responsibility of maintaining the detour route until regular traffic is allowed back on U.S. 89.

Dallas Hammit, senior deputy state engineer for ADOT, said he was concerned with the lengthy process and time involved with acquiring the right-of-way application and the need for a legal description survey.

Navajo Region Division of Transportation, said there is not very much more environmental work that needs to be done on N20, if ADOT sticks to the existing alignment.

"There is an existing environmental document, archaeology work and bounds survey has been done. But you're right, the

alignment, but he was dubious about approval of the 60 to 90 day timeframe.

ADOT said they could provide a temporary legal description and plat, while following the designer along the route and writing legal descriptions. However, ADOT survey crews wanted time to ensure there were no mathematical errors before submission to the Land Department.

Developing a set of plans is going to be the time-consuming part of the process, they said.

In order to speed along the process, Paulson Chaco, NDOT Director, said he would direct his project management department to meet with the reviewing parties from the Nation – Fish and Wildlife, Land Dept, Historic Preservation Dept – and iron out details before the packet is sent in for review.

This would streamline the approval process, he said, before the permission to survey and ROW applications were submitted for approval.

“If we could submit (the packet) just once, that would be good,” Chaco said. “That way you take care of your centerline, profile, cross-section, and the temporary easement at the same time to take care of your meets and bounds.”

He said NDOT would see if Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly could speed the process along by allowing ADOT’s consultant on N20 to conduct surveying activities, via the emergency declaration that was executed by the Navajo Nation on Feb. 24.

“I need to get together with the president’s office to see if he can issue a letter, short of going through federal regulations,” Chaco said.

There is an existing centerline for N20, but some “bits and pieces” where there is no centerline, thwarts efforts to establish meets and bounds necessary for the design.

Hammit said Aztec was selected as the consultant because they had four survey crews at

their disposal for immediate action. He added that ADOT has also advertised for statement of qualifications for a contractor to do the actual road construction, employing construction manager at-risk methodology.

Proposals are due to ADOT on April 2. Hammit said the review team will have a week to review the proposals and select a contractor.

“But before we could start work, we would need the right-of-way and environmental clearance,” Hammit underscored.

Simone Jones, acting realty officer for the BIA Navajo Region, explained the process for granting an easement for construction.

“Typically, you begin with the permission to survey as step one in the right-of-way process for the BIA, under 25 CFR, Part 169. It requires the consent of the landowner, in this case, it would be the Navajo Nation,” Jones said.

She said the Navajo Nation would grant permission to survey for meets and bound description, centerline, and any archaeological or environmental work.

“When we have the tract permission, it’s a quick turnaround and the BIA will acknowledge they have tribal consent and according to the Nation’s terms and conditions with permission to survey, ADOT can get on the road,” Jones said.

Consent for the right-of-way follows the same footprint, including SAS 164 review, archaeological and environmental assessment, and centerline data.

ADOT is pushing to have N20 paved by summer 2013 to restore essential traffic from U.S. 89.

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Paulson Chaco, Navajo Division of Transportation Director, makes a point about the need to coordinate to meet the short timeframe required to have N20 paved by summer 2013. Chaco said NDOT will work with Navajo Nation departments to expedite the approval process for the required permits and clearances. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



David Zimmerman, ADOT Historic Preservation team member, shares information regarding archaeological and environmental considerations along Navajo Route 20. (Photo by Rick Abasta)