

# Navajo Route 20 soft dedication slated for August 29



*Before paving began, right-of-way fencing was a major concern from community members, especially because of the open grazing land status. Arizona Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration eventually decided to include fencing in the project, which cost nearly \$40 million to complete. (Photo by Rick Abasta)*

the road will revert back to the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

U.S. 89 was closed on Feb. 22, after a dry landslide damaged a portion of roadway near the Bitter Springs and Echo Cliffs area, south of the Big Cut.

The Navajo Division of Transportation, ADOT, BIA and Federal Highway Administration joined forces to pave N20 as a detour route.

“This was a game-changing collaboration,” said Paulson Chaco, director of NDOT. “Not only did ADOT get this paving done in such a short timeframe, but we all came together to expedite the project.”

Numerous meetings were hosted and included Navajo community members affected by the closure. Again and again, they voiced their concerns over right-of-way fencing and bus turnout lanes.

What originally began as an \$18 million project blossomed into an almost \$40 million paving construction effort that included 28 miles of paving, turnout lanes, right-of-way fencing, culverts, cattle guards, and shoulders for the roadway.

The FHWA’s Emergency Relief Program will reimburse ADOT for construction costs incurred on the project.

For months, travelers had to navigate U.S. 160 and State Route 98 for access to Page. U.S. 89T will provide the most direct route, saving 45 minutes of drive time and about 100 miles.

Construction crews worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week to get the project done quickly.

Dual hot plants and paving spreads on the northern and southern ends of N20 constructed the roadway simultaneously, in order to make the August 2013 deadline.

According to Jason Yazzie, senior planner for NDOT, now that the paving portion is completed, construction crews are focused on other facets of the project that need to be completed.

Right-of-way fencing, refining back slopes, reseeding, bus turnout lanes, and cattle guards are still in progress, he noted.

“All of these will be done within the next two weeks or so,” Yazzie said.

The official soft dedication celebration for the road will take place on August 29, at the junction of the Coppermine Chapter road and N20. Festivities will begin at 10 a.m. (DST)

Floyd Stevens, president of Coppermine Chapter, said ADOT’s road crew will continue working on finishing touches for the roadway through Sept.

“We’re very excited about the opening. The word is already out,” Stevens said.

Until the road is officially opened to the traveling public, motorists are encouraged to continue utilizing the detour route on U.S. 160 and State Route 98 for travel into Page.

Information: [www.navajodot.org](http://www.navajodot.org) or [www.azdot.gov/us89](http://www.azdot.gov/us89)

**BODAWAY GAP**—It only took 79 days to pave Navajo Route 20.

Finishing 11 days ahead of schedule, the crew from FNF Construction, Inc. paved the final mile of Navajo Route 20 on August 8, 2013. Construction officially began on May 21.

FNF was contracted by the Arizona Department of Transportation to pave 28 miles of N20. Assisting them was AZTEC Engineering and RUMCO.

The new road was completed just in time, as the Page Unified School District started the new school year. Hundreds of Navajo students attend school in Page and previously faced bumpy roads and lengthy drive times to get to school.

N20 is now designated as U.S. 89T and will be utilized to restore essential traffic from U.S. 89 for a period of three years, after which