

Navajo Route 4 road construction resumes in Pinon



Construction activities on Navajo Route 4 in Pinon have resumed after being shut down in Oct. 2012 for safety reasons. Here, NDOT heavy equipment operator Cornelius Kenny prepares and mixes base material to be placed on the roadway. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

A little over seven months ago, construction was halted on Navajo Route 4, southwest of the remote Arizona community of Pinon, after Navajo Division of Transportation workers encountered armed community members driving through the worksite.

Construction on N4 has resumed and NDOT crewmembers are back onsite, continuing work on the dirt road at the edge of town that sees much traffic on a daily basis, ranging from school buses, personally-owned vehicles, to commercial vehicles that use the road as a short cut to Hopi land.

"The safety of our staff was the greatest concern for our division," said Paulson Chaco, director of NDOT. "We are back out on the roadway and

construction will be completed this month."

He said the N4 construction was only one of many projects under construction across the Navajo Nation this summer.

Chaco said, "N4 is one of several road projects that have been pending since 2005 that this administration is bringing to completion. NDOT continues to move forward improving the Navajo Nation's transportation system."

Cost for the Fuel Excise Tax road project is over \$600,000. The cost includes over \$400,000 in materials and \$200,000 in equipment and manpower from NDOT.

The completion date for the road improvement project is June 30, 2013. The location of the project site is from the intersection of N4 and Navajo

Route 8031, stretching west for three-miles.

Recently, geotech fabric was utilized to cover a section of N4 to protect an archaeological site that is located on the roadbed.

NDOT engineer-in-training Lyle Begay is leading the project.

"After this arch site is covered and protected, we will proceed with the tilling and compaction of the soil earth bed," Begay said. "That is when the gravel and the stabilizing materials will be coming in."

Hubert Dayzie from Recon Oil joined the NDOT crew to take soil samples within the project site.

The samples were taken to a geotechnical firm to perform soil testing and analysis to

determine the best mixture for the Road Bond stabilizer.

Recon Oil is the contractor providing aggregate base material for the construction.

"For this N4 project, we are planning to gravel and stabilize three-miles of roadway," Begay said.

Project manager Priscilla Lee said the N4 FET project was budgeted in FY 2005.

"We started in the fall of 2012 originally but we had to shut down for safety reasons. Now that we started up again, police are patrolling the area periodically," Lee said.

She said the work crew was awaiting 600,000 gallons of water from the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources.

NDOT purchased 6,442 tons of base-course for the

project. Navajo County matched \$52,146 to purchase 1,399 tons of base-course for the project.

Base course is the sub-layer of the roadway placed on the top soil to provide a foundation for the road.

Lee listed two graders, three rollers, one scraper, one loader, three water trucks, and one dozer for the project, including 10 crewmembers.

Begay noted the logistics of getting materials, equipment and workforce in place is only a part of the overall process.

He said NDOT is out in the field setting the gears in motion for infrastructure projects across the Navajo Nation, although many communities are often impatient with the lengthy timeframe for construction to begin.

“I would like people to understand the process that goes into working with Navajo Nation roads,” Begay said. “It requires compliance from several different fields of work that deal with the land.

“One of the major ones that we’re mitigating today is archaeology,” he said.

Other compliance factors he cited were environmental and water, which requires documentation and regulation of soils and materials falling into America’s waterways, or encumbering on biologically-sensitive areas.

Using those two fields of work as an example, preconstruction can take up to a year before compliance is made and we can go out and actually mobilize equipment and labor, he said.

“We are out here. If not out here on the road, we’re behind the scenes trying to get the roads improved,” Begay said.

Information:

www.navajodot.org



NDOT engineer-in-training Lyle Begay is leading the N4 project in Pinon. The road improvement project was funded by Fuel Excise Tax dollars in FY 2005 and is one of several projects across the Navajo Nation that will be completed by summer’s end. Begay said Navajo communities must understand the mandatory compliance process that takes up most of the time required to complete the construction projects. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Geraldine Jones, senior environmental specialist for NDOT, measures the roadway to determine the length of geotech fabric required to protect an archaeological site on the roadbed. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Top, NDOT crewmembers carry a roll of geotech fabric that was used to cover an archaeological site located on the roadbed. Right, an NDOT dump truck delivers boulders that will be used in the road improvement project. The N4 road project will be completed by June 30, 2013. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

