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## **President Ben Shelly declares U.S. Route 491 groundbreaking a historic achievement**

TWIN LAKES, N.M.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly commended state, county, local and Navajo lawmakers and officials for their support in making U.S. Route 491 safer for all New Mexicans at a groundbreaking ceremony along the highway.

“There are many people we want to thank for making this four-lane construction a reality. First and foremost, thanks are in order for Sen. Pinto. His tireless efforts to widen this road have finally paid off,” President Shelly said.

He also thanked New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez for her support and willingness to work with the Navajo Nation. The governor announced in March that \$78 million was made available for the completion of the U.S. Route 491.



The project includes construction of two additional lanes, increasing capacity from two lanes to four lanes, drainage improvements and construction of acceleration and deceleration lanes in congested and high traffic areas. The project will stretch from mile marker 15.1, north of Twin Lakes to mile marker 36.9, south of Naschitti.

The highway is a major artery for travelers of the Four Corners Region and a hub for school buses, first responders, tourists and commercial truckers. The importance of this road was highlighted in July 5, 2013, when a portion of the road was closed due to monsoon floods. Traffic was detoured and caused a major inconvenience for travelers.

The stretch of highway was formerly known as “Devil’s Highway” due to the high fatality rate and number of vehicle accidents.

“Today, the four-lane highway has decreased the number of deaths and accidents. It as been a sound investment for New Mexico and for the Navajo Nation,” President Shelly added.

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