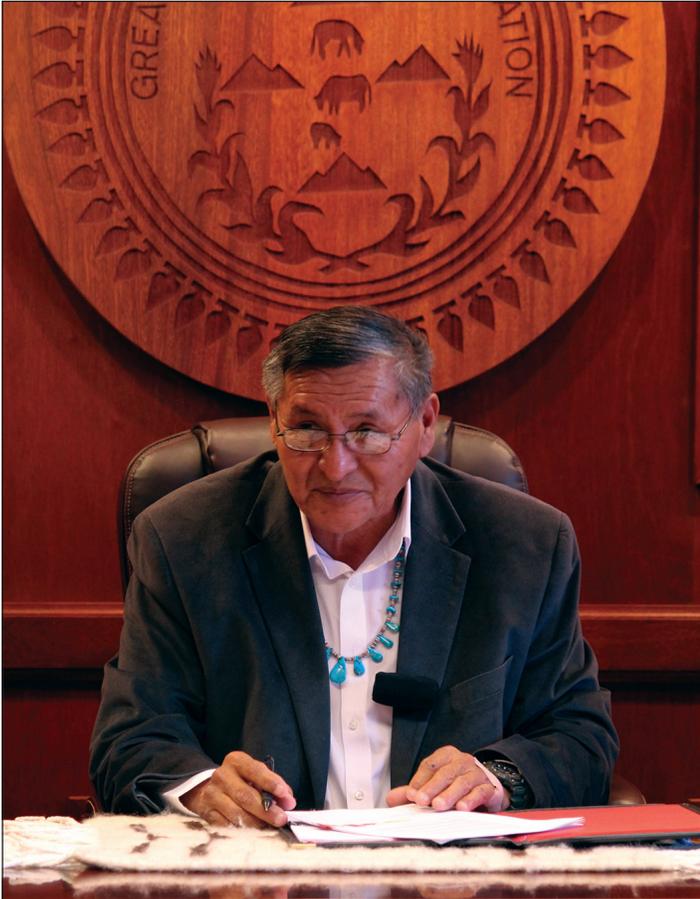




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President Shelly announces return of \$1.2 million in FET funding



President Shelly said he is happy to announce that \$1.2 million in Navajo Nation Fuel Excise Tax dollars will be returned to Navajo DOT for road maintenance. The return of this funding has been a priority since he took office. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— The Navajo Nation Fuel Excise Tax continues to make a difference in improving the quality of life for tribal members.

Since taking office in 2011, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly has pushed for the return of FET dollars that's earmarked for the state of Ariz.

For every gallon of gasoline purchased, 18 cents is taxed and deposited into the Navajo Nation Road Fund. For every gallon of diesel, 25 cents is taxed and deposited into the fund. The state receives 6 cents from every

gallon of gas sold on the Nation.

FET funding is used for road improvement projects such as school bus routes, drainage crossings, access roads, maintenance, grading and many other enhancements.

After their inauguration, the Shelly-Jim administration faced 78 unfinished FET projects left behind by the previous administration.

On March 28, 2013, the Naa'bi'k'iyati' Committee placed a moratorium on new FET projects until the outstanding work was completed.

More than 60 of the projects have been completed since that time, allowing Navajo Division of Transportation to begin soliciting for new proposals.

"Completing the Fuel Excise Tax projects that were left in limbo was a priority for our administration," President Shelly said. "I'm happy to report that we've done our job and completed most of this work.

"Beyond that, we have been successful for the return of tribal FET dollars from the state of Arizona," he added.

President Shelly said servicing school bus routes has been the priority and that the new Huerfano bridge was testament to the work of his administration.

Over the past decade, FET dollars have averaged more than \$13 million annually on the Navajo Nation. From that amount, \$4 million goes to the state of Arizona, \$2 million is deposited into the Permanent Trust Fund, \$3 million is for the tribal road fund and \$3 million is utilized for road maintenance.

NDOT has followed the directives of President Shelly.

"President Shelly's directive was very clear: finish the outstanding FET projects," said Paulson Chaco, director of NDOT.

Chaco said his other priority was working with tribal legislators in the state legislature to begin recouping FET funds going into the state coffers.

"We are excited with the news that \$1.2 million will be returned to the Nation from Arizona for transportation infrastructure. This would not have been possible without the help of Senator Carlyle Begay," he said.

Sen. Begay said infrastructure development, especially transportation, has been a priority for him throughout his service in the Arizona Senate.

"Transportation is what binds our Nation together. It's what allows our kids to go to school, to go to work, to go to the hospital," Begay said.

The \$1.2 million in FET dollars returning to the Navajo Nation will equate to about \$750 per mile for unpaved school bus route maintenance, according to NDOT.

Begay said the \$9.1 billion budget packet that was passed by the Arizona Legislature this past session allowed for the return of \$1.2 million for the Navajo Nation.

"We'll continue to pursue policies that will enable us to become more self-determined and really look at avenues to retain greater economies of scale," Begay said. "Bringing more jobs, improving education, improving infrastructure.

"Much of that doesn't occur overnight. We'll continue making the small changes to move toward a more positive direction," he said.

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