

San Juan County Commission approves MOU with Navajo DOT



Navajo Division of Transportation Director Paulson Chaco reports to the San Juan County Commission about the memorandum of understanding between the county and the Navajo Nation. Standing to the left of Chaco is Dave Keck, San Juan County Public Works administrator. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

AZTEC, N.M.-During the Feb. 5, 2013 regular meeting of the San Juan County Commission, a memorandum of understanding between the Navajo Division of Transportation and the county was unanimously approved.

The MOU provides the framework for both governments to craft intergovernmental agreements to provide road maintenance and construction projects on the Navajo Nation.

San Juan County Public Works administrator Dave Keck said the previous MOU with NDOT expired in Dec. 2012.

“This MOU establishes a framework and workgroup that will look at potential transportation projects on the reservation, as well as off the reservation,” Keck said.

He spoke of the previous collaborations between the county and NDOT, specifically the chip sealing of County Road 7750 in the Lake Valley area. NDOT contributed \$800,000 for the project.

“We are looking at channeling some BIA, what’s called Indian Reservation Roads funds, through the Navajo DOT,” Keck said. “It looks like we’ll be getting \$1.5 million up front for the replacement of the ‘Military Bridge’ in the Huerfano area, on County Road 7150.”

Conversely, he said the county would assist NDOT with acquiring aggregate road base material outside the reservation for projects on the Navajo Nation.

“We’ve located an aggregate source in Kirtland that would utilize our (rock) crushing contract,” Keck said.

The county plans to haul the crushed material onto the reservation and stockpile different sized rocks for road maintenance activities for chapters in the eastern and northern agencies.

NDOT director Paulson Chaco said the Navajo Nation has worked with San Juan County for the execution of intergovernmental

agreements that resulted in projects benefiting both the Navajo Nation and county.

“I worked with Dave in the past and I know how hard he works for our constituents,” Chaco said. “We confirm that the Navajo Nation will contribute \$1.5 million for a county bridge on the reservation that serves the community of Huerfano.”

He noted that any specific projects between both governments would go through the intergovernmental agreement process, to ensure both parties approved project-specific work.

NDOT’s request to use the county’s rock crushing capabilities would be for chapter projects located within San Juan County, he added.

“(Partnerships) is also one of the platforms of Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and he is very supportive of this legislation,” Chaco said.

County commissioner Glo-Jean Todacheene commended NDOT on their fleet of advanced equipment and said working together was the key.

“I hope this MOU will do a great collaboration so we can get these roads fixed,” Todacheene said.

County commissioner Margaret McDaniel agreed with her colleague and said she held vested interest in the MOU because most of the proposed activities are in her district.

“Anytime that we can work together for the benefit of all the citizens, that’s a really good thing. This is important for all of us and I’m really anxious to work together on this,” McDaniel said.

Information:

www.navajodot.org