Commission convened at the Navajo Transportation Complex on Feb. 22 to discuss the collapsed roadway on U.S. 89, approximately 25 miles south of Page.

The roadway collapse was likely the result of a geologic slump on Feb. 20, at 5:09 a.m.

Taft Blackhorse, manager of the Navajo Division of Transportation Department of Project Management, said the road damage was the result of a slump. His educational background in geology led to this conclusion, he said.

“I don’t think it was a small earthquake or tremor. It appears to have been loose soil that eventually eroded, commonly known as a slump,” Blackhorse said.

According the U.S. Geologic Survey, a slump occurs on hillsides that have a thick cover of loose, rocky debris, commonly taking place after heavy rains saturate the ground.

Regardless of the cause, several Navajo chapters have been affected by the road closure and the commission cited concerns ranging from the transport of school kids and emergency medical service response.

NDOT director Paulson Chaco is working with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Coconino County to ensure maintenance of alternate dirt roads for the influx of travelers in the area.

“We have NDOT crews working with the BIA to complete blading activities and to assist with setting up electronic message boards to alert motorists of the road closure,” he said.

U.S. 89 is closed from mile post 544.50 to mile post 524.

The Arizona Department of Transportation has detoured traffic at U.S. 89A to State Road 98 and on to U.S. 160 for motorists traveling to and from Page.