



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Broadband Buildout Plans for the Navajo Nation

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PHOTO: Council Delegates Mark Freeland and Kee Allen Begay, Jr. with Jeff Sobotka, Christopher Becenti, and Mike Bielecki at Arizona Commerce Authority in Phoenix, AZ.

Phoenix, Ariz. — Last Friday, members of the State Task Force subcommittee of the 24th Navajo Nation Council met with the Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona Governor’s Office, Arizona Department of Transportation, and KPMG on buildout plans for broadband on the Navajo Nation.

Arizona State Broadband Director, Jeff Sobotka stated, “Through the analysis within the State of Arizona, unserved and underserved populations are not getting access because they are not highly populated and we want to serve as many people as possible through this infrastructure plan.”

The buildout plan proposes to expand long-haul and middle mile connectivity to unserved and underserved rural areas throughout the State of Arizona. In line with local and state strategic planning, the proposed infrastructure will provide a robust governance structure to be competitive for available federal broadband programs.

Also in attendance was the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NNTRC), who emphasized the need to provide capacity for build out of broadband for education and telehealth purposes in line with statewide infrastructure plans.

NNTRC reported that rural addressing will be more crucial than ever to complete within the Navajo Arizona populations. Rural addressing will assist in the implementation of E-911 services that the Division of Community Development and Division of Public Safety is currently tasked with.

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Furthermore, NNTRC stressed that the Navajo Nation needs to partner with local service providers such as Navajo Tribal Utility Authority and T-Mobile.

“Connecting broadband and cell service to our Navajo people is the ultimate goal,” said Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain) “There are countless benefits of having broadband, especially during this pandemic, where our students will be learning from home, and the partnerships with developing telecommunication infrastructure on the Navajo Nation is crucial. We will continue to discuss and advocate to key state and federal stakeholders to make this happen.”

The State of Arizona will invest with financial contributions towards infrastructure planning and encouraged the Navajo Nation to reach out for resources that could help with financial capacity for operation and maintenance expenses.

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