



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Completion of New Bridge Offers Safe Travel for Tsé Sí Aní Community

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PHOTO: The newly constructed N9402 five-span bridge in Lupton, Ariz.

TSÉ SÍ ANÍ, Ariz. — Wednesday, members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council (NNC), Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, and newly appointed Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Navajo Regional Director, Gregory Mehojah, gathered with the Tsé Sí Aní Community and Chapter Officials to celebrate the completion of a new two-lane concrete bridge over the Rio Puerco Wash in Lupton, Ariz.

The new N9402 Bridge serves as a replacement to a deteriorated one-lane wood and steel bridge. The bridge now accommodates the average daily vehicle traffic count and provides safe travel for community members, school buses, and first responders.

“It is with great appreciation and overwhelming gratitude that I recognize my Honorable colleague Wilson C. Stewart, Jr., the Fort Defiance Chapter Leadership, the Resources and Development Committee of the NNC, the Office of the President and Vice President, the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation and the BIA,” said Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Houck, Lupton, Nahat’á Dził). “It was about 2 years ago, we had met with the Navajo Department of Transportation and brainstormed about options and various funding possibilities for the Puerco Wash Bridge replacement project.”

The project was funded by the Federal Highway Administration in the amount of over \$5 million but the funding was not immediately available.

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However, Delegate Smith and the Tsé Sí Aní Chapter pushed the bridge project forward with the assistance of Council Delegate Wilson C. Stewart, Jr. (Fort Defiance, Crystal, Red Lake, Sawmill) and the Fort Defiance Chapter.

Delegate Stewart and the community of Fort Defiance agreed to lend a portion of the funding set aside for the Blue Canyon Bridge Project in Fort Defiance, to the Tsé Sí Aní Chapter in order to immediately start construction for the N9402 Bridge Project.

“We have had this project at the status of ‘shovel ready’ for quite some time and all that was lacking was the funding to move this project forward. We met with Honorable Wilson Stewart, Jr. to discuss a possible short-term loan from his existing road project, in which Tsé Sí Aní Chapter would borrow the funding to start the bridge project and in the next few months, through already approved Federal Highway funding for this bridge, we would pay back the loan amount,” added Delegate Smith, Jr. “Thankfully, this coordination of funding resource was a complete success and the community of Tsé Sí Aní Chapter is beyond grateful for the extraordinary charity of the Fort Defiance Chapter and Delegate Stewart.”

The bridge design was completed by the BIA Navajo Region Department of Transportation who also secured the environmental and right-of-way clearances for the project.

The Navajo Nation Division of Transportation selected FNF Construction as the contractors and Wilson & Company as the dedicated construction managers and engineers. The construction crews worked diligently and finished the bridge project eight months ahead of schedule.

“As leaders, we look at how we can assist and help our community members and Nation wherever they fall short,” said Delegate Stewart. “These are lessons that I’ve learned from home and these are teachings that the Resources and Development Committee members strive to exemplify through our work with our chapters, divisions, programs and departments. We do our best to represent and assist them with financial needs and needs of the community.”

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