



U.S. DOT Assistant Secretary James Crawford Visits Navajo Nation



*Assistant Secretary Crawford and Navajo DOT at a site visit on Blue Canyon Road, AZ.
Photo Courtesy of Eli Leslie, Navajo DOT.*

WINDOW ROCK, AZ – Assistant Secretary for Tribal Affairs at the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), James A. Crawford, visited the Navajo Nation on July 17, 2025, for a full day of engagement with Navajo Nation leadership, Navajo Nation Division of Transportation (Navajo DOT) officials, and project sites as part of the Department's commitment to strengthening tribal infrastructure and self-governance.

The day began with a meeting between Assistant Secretary Crawford and members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council at the Budget and Finance Office. Discussions focused on the unique transportation challenges facing the Navajo Nation, including over 9,000 miles of unpaved roads that limit access to services such as healthcare, education, and employment.

Later in the morning, Assistant Secretary Crawford participated in a site visit with the Navajo DOT to Blue Canyon Road (N9073) located in the Fort Defiance Agency. This

infrastructure initiative encompasses six miles of newly constructed pavement as well as the replacement of an existing bridge. The visit was followed by a working lunch with President Buu Nygren, Navajo DOT and executive staff at the Office of the President and Vice President, where the importance of technical assistance, access to federal funding, and progress toward the Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Program were emphasized.

In the afternoon, Assistant Secretary Crawford toured Navajo DOT Headquarters in Tse Bonito, NM, and participated in a presentation led by Navajo DOT Division Director Tom Platero. The presentation highlighted Navajo DOT's strides in capacity building under the Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP) and the Nation's interest in mirroring state-level transportation efficiency while incorporating Navajo-specific environmental and cultural regulations.

James A. Crawford, a citizen of the Forest County Potawatomi Community, was appointed Assistant Secretary in July 2025. A former Tribal Chairman and long-time advocate for self-governance, Crawford now leads USDOT's Tribal Affairs office, where he continues to prioritize tribal infrastructure needs, regulatory reform, and meaningful government-to-government partnerships.

Crawford's visit reinforces the commitment to advancing tribal self-determination and modernizing transportation infrastructure across Indian Country. His engagement with Navajo DOT and Navajo Nation leadership paves the way for deeper collaboration and continued investment in the roads, bridges, and systems that connect and empower Navajo communities.