

Tsaile/Wheatfields community members celebrate the completion of Navajo Route 12

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Tsaile/Wheatfields, Ariz. – On July 6, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was joined by 24th

Navajo Nation Council Delegate Carl Slater, Tsalie/Wheatfields Chapter officials and community members during a July 6 ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the completion of Navajo Route 12, a primary route for Tsaile/Wheatfields residents, Diné College students, and first responders. In 2019, Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer approved funding for the project with the support of the late Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye.

The N12 project in Tsaile/Wheatfields includes 10.7 miles of new paving, asphalt placement, roadway excavation and embankment, subgrade treatment where needed, placement of aggregate base course, culvert installations, concrete wing walls, concrete slope blanket and riprap installations, turnouts, and cattleguard, signage, and fencing installations. The Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority was contracted to complete the project.

“This is a major accomplishment for the community, for the people who use this route daily. Our very own Navajo construction professionals completed the project under the leadership of NDOT Director Garret Silversmith,” Nez said.

Nez also pointed out how much the road improvement would help the community.

“The road improvement will help address safety concerns and increase access to school, work,

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health, and emergency services. Now, many Diné College students and employees can commute on this route safely on a daily basis. Throughout all weather conditions and the uncertain impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, NDOT continued with the construction and remained on schedule to complete the N12 project,” Nez said.

He also took time to thank everyone involved in the project.

“The Nez-Lizer Administration appreciates the support of past and present chapter leadership, community members for advocating for a safer route for community members, emergency responders, school buses, and Diné College students. Based on their efforts, legislation to fund the project was brought forth by the late Delegate BeGaye and eventually signed into law,” Nez said.

“When we have all the partners on the same page and creating solutions, we can make investments and decisions that can improve our communities’ safety, health, and growth. Today, we celebrate many years of hard work, commitment, and advocacy,” Slater said.

“It’s indeed a wonderful collaborative achievement for the communities of Tsaile and Wheatfields. We appreciate President Nez, Vice President Lizer, NECA, Navajo Nation Council, chapter leadership, Federal Highway Administration, and NDOT staff for working together to finish the project. The new roadway corridor contains many improvements, including new bridges, safety elements, new asphalt surface, and more,” Silversmith said.

“Since 2008, past chapter leadership, community elders, NDOT official Marco Sells, and former Arizona Department of Transportation official Mike Blankenship have been working hard to prioritize the road project. Today is a bittersweet celebration because many of our elders and past leaders have passed on and did not have the opportunity to see the finished road. Together, we worked hard to provide a safe road for our children and grandchildren,” former Tsaile/Wheatfields Chapter President Zane James stated.

“Transportation infrastructure improvements to highways, bridges, dams, and dirt roads are the most obvious need in rural communities. The improvements to N12 will bring significant benefits to elders, students, families, and first responders. We appreciate the community members’ patience with NDOT and NECA as they completed the pavement. Congratulations to all of the

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residents and everyone who laid their hands to this great work,” Lizer said.

Also in attendance at the community celebration was 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Tsaile/Wheatfields Chapter President Devon Begay, Chapter Vice President Stanley Kedelty, NECA officials Stanley Yazzie and Brett Grubbs, and Lukachukai Chapter President Paula S. Begay.

The Nez-Lizer Administration commends the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation for working closely with chapter leadership and community members for completing the N12 project and for managing over 100 road projects across the Navajo Nation.