

Broadband Initiative on Navajo Nation Notes

Thursday, April 13, 2022

10 AM – 4 PM DST

In-Person and Zoom Meeting
Utah Navajo Trust Fund Office
151 E. 500 N., Blanding UT

Presiding: Coconino County District 5 Supervisor Lena Fowler
24th NNC Resources and Development Committee Member Kee Allen Begay, Jr.

Welcome and Introduction – Lena Fowler, Coconino County Supervisor & Kee Allen Begay Jr., Navajo Nation Council Delegate:

- Ms. Fowler thanks everyone for joining the meeting today and will be joining virtually. Overlooked the meeting's agenda. At the end of the meeting, we will be discussing e-rate projects on the Navajo Nation as the final presentation for the day that was not scheduled as part of today's agenda. Mr. Begay thanks everyone for joining us today and will be joining us virtually. Mr. Hanley will provide the update on legislation 0257-21 that did not pass by one vote. The NN President and Speaker will re-evaluate the budget on this legislation. Mr. Begay feels that this is an opportunity for leadership to bring these broadband issues to the front to be addressed. Deadlines are approaching for some of the funding needed and we need to work with each other to meet these deadlines. Mr. Begay is thankful with all the collaboration with NN chapters and other organizations so far. States that it is good that we are working with the different state governments to try and get funding from these states for broadband since the Navajo Nation does expand into more than one state. We also need to provide updated reports for everyone and to show our progress. Reiterates the importance of broadband for the Navajo Nation. Ms. Fowler introduces Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown.
- Mr. Nathaniel Brown gives self-introduction and appreciation of being present today. The pandemic has shown us how important broadband is. He highlights the lack of infrastructure and how it affects Navajo Nation today that includes not only broadband but electricity and water. Notes that he continues to fight to get water available to members of his community, despite Peabody previously using millions of gallons of water for their mining operation.

Summary of Broadband Initiative on Navajo Nation - Patrick Sandoval, Apache County Dist. 1 Manager:

- Firstly, notes that the original initiative of the broadband meeting with the county was to bring awareness to the broadband issue and to assist the Navajo Nation with establishing broadband. Now, the cause has grown more with other companies, private interests, and other government officials involved. Would like to thank Tico Charlee's appoint to the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission. Mr. Sandoval believes that with Mr. Charlee along with Ms. Sonia Nez of the NN broadband office, we can give them the leadership of this initiative but maintain our presence within it. We currently need to solidify our strategies and possibly some policies as support to continue with our situation with Navajo Nation. One of the goals that Mr. Sandoval and Ms. Fowler have in common is equality. How to bring equality to

the members of the Navajo Nation not only for broadband but with other areas. Getting broadband to people is not impossible but will be difficult with the different challenges we currently face. For those in remote areas, how close can we get to them? We need to look at funding and planning. Once we begin to address the broadband infrastructure set up, we can start to address the use of broadband beyond education and healthcare use. Notes that rural addressing is still at the center of the issue, and we need our law makers to make it happen. We need to continue to work with Navajo Nation, but we also need to look at our regional efforts and beyond.

Navajo Legislative Update – Kee Allen Begay Jr., NN Council Delegate & Donovan Hanley, NN Council Legislative Staff Assistant:

- Mr. Hanley gives a brief update concerning the legislation 0257-21. There were some amendments done to the legislation on the previous Monday that led to the legislation not passing. There is no specified deadline for the use of funding by the Navajo Nation except the federal deadline for use of the ARPA funds, but priority is given to the legislation to pass as soon as possible. They are hoping no later than the summer session of the Navajo Nation council. In the coming weeks, delegates will be working on the legislation. Mr. Begay believes this delay will give them time to put in extra input and recommendations for the legislation as they meet again with the NN President, the Speaker, and other delegates. Would like to submit a request letter for the attendance of the NN President and Speaker to join the next broadband meeting. Mr. Sandoval believes we need to submit the information from these broadband meetings to be part of the rewrite of the legislation.

Federal funding deadlines for broadband – Jeff Sobotka, Arizona State Broadband Director:

- Mr. Sobotka gives a PowerPoint Presentation on the Federal Funding Deadlines for Broadband. The Infrastructure Act provides about \$65 billion in funds and there are multiple funding opportunities. Notes that some of these broadband fund programs may overlap and it will be best to apply for one or multiple. Comments that we do need to solidify our strategy to help us move forward. Christopher Becenti put forth a great strategy to connect the NN chapter houses that we can use as a basis for ours. Recommends Sandip Bhowmick to work with Navajo Nation who can provide his expertise with broadband. Mr. Sobotka breaks down an overview of the broadband funding programs available. The FCC subsidy program is currently helping Arizonians make internet affordable. We are doing great with the number of people who have signed up and would like to continue to see people benefit from this program.

Broadband 101 – What is broadband? – Lydia Lee, Fiber Project Manager, NTUA:

- Ms. Lee gives a PowerPoint presentation on What is Broadband? Overviews the different forms that broadband can take. Broadband, by definition, provides bandwidth over wireless/fiber connection, used for internet with a minimum 25 Mbps download / 3 Mbps upload. The NTUA fiber line backbone extends across the Navajo Nation that starts from Farmington, NM to Tuba City, AZ. The fiber line can provide 100 Mbps in download and upload speeds and this can be upgraded to 1000 Mbps. They were funded by an NTIA grant from 2009 – 2013 that help provide NTUA communications in communities that they are continuing to expanded on today. They primarily install fiber lines on existing NTUA electrical poles. The timeline for installation

can be grouped into five categories with the Right of Way being the biggest time consumption for getting the process done. Right of ways can take anywhere from six months to two years for approval. Construction and installation are one of the quickest processes. She comments that they do have fiber projects for the Navajo Mountain area that are still pending due to right of ways, biological clearances, and other studies to be done. Overviews the services they provide. NTUA strives to provide their broadband services to as many people as possible on the Navajo Nation. Mr. Sandoval comments that it would be best if we can find out who we can reach out to help expedite the right of way process and clearances that take up time since these funds do have deadlines. He further comments that we need to make note of the issues, concerns, and recommendations people are having in reference to broadband to make the leadership aware of and to fix. Also notes the cost per pole, to use, is currently between \$27 & \$29 for pole attachment. The national average is around \$7 for pole attachment, and we still need to work on bringing that cost down. Mr. Nelson makes a recommendation to have spectrum leasing discussed at the next meeting to help drive our broadband support. Charlaine Tso, NN Council Delegate, makes note of the issues they are having trying to provide internet service to students in her communities and the options they have tried.

Where is broadband on Navajo Nation & partnership opportunities:

- NN Infrastructure Assessment – Patrick Sandoval, Apache County Dist. 1 Manager:
 - (Displays map of the Project Navajo Nation Infrastructure Assessment) The assessment was completed in 2019 and is available online. Having this assessment would help the Navajo Nation view the latest infrastructure on the Navajo Nation and help with strategies. Mr. Sandoval would like to have the Navajo Nation broadband infrastructure expanded to the point that everyone is benefiting from it. Currently, counties that cover part of the Navajo Nation do operate differently due to the difference in internet service availability. Another point we need to look at is the price of broadband. We need to make it affordable. (Shows second assessment map of Arcadian’s fiber lines) Notes Arcadia is looking to building fiber lines, referred to as the horseshoe, from Salt Lake City to Phoenix, from Phoenix to Albuquerque, and Albuquerque to Denver. Comments that Arcadian is looking to be the service provider for the large data centers on the Navajo Nation. Mr. Sandoval personally comments that he believes Arcadian has brought more awareness to the broadband issue on the Navajo Nation especially to NN leadership.
- Electrifying and Broadbanding the Comb Ridge/El Capitan Community in Kayenta Chapter of the Navajo Nation – A Resilient Solar-Based Autonomous Microgrid Solution - Nathaniel Brown, NN Council Delegate:
 - Mr. Brown gives a PowerPoint Presentation on Electrifying and Broadbanding. Notes that his three chapters have formed a non-profit that is obtaining funds from the Navajo Nation, the state, and federal government. Overviews his non-profit project. The project is working with the University of Utah. They are looking to provide broadband and solar to 24 homes using a microgrid that will help keep costs down. This project is running into setbacks with inflation, material shortage, material costs, and shortage in manpower. Mr. Brown further comments that they have also looked at other options like SpaceX and hope at some point, to work with Tesla. They are hoping their non-profit

will bring not just broadband to the communities but help the communities grow their businesses, provide affordable utility and jobs. Mr. Brown hopes that in sharing this information, others will benefit from this knowledge and that they'll get more funding opportunities by looking beyond the normal grants. They are looking at sustainability as the end goal.

- Fiberoptic Installations Updates Navajo Mountain & Aneth, UT - Lynne Yocom, Fiber Optics Manager, UDOT; Emery Brock-Johansson, CEO of Emery Telcom & Velena Tsosie, Manger, Choice NTUAW:
 - Ms. Yocom gives a PowerPoint presentation on UDOT Broadband Initiative on Navajo Nation. Overviews UDOT strategic goals, CCTV deployments, UDOT fiber group organization chart (makes note that they contract a lot of the work out), and environmental and design that has allowed them to build down to Navajo Mountain. The UDOT fiber map shows their fiber installation status and ownership. They work with Utah Communications Authority (UCA) who provides the 911 radio systems. The UCA would like to know what needs to be done to get push to talk radio on Navajo Mountain since it is a dark area. They do have projects scheduled for Navajo Mountain and Aneth but right of ways are holding things up.
 - Mr. Johansson provides an overview of Emery Telcom. References Ms. Yocom's fiber map in her presentation. They have partnered with Ms. Yocom and others to provide connection. They are trying to get fiber on the Navajo Nation, but they do have funding to provide fiber next to the Navajo Nation. Emery did try to provide fiber to Monument Valley and across to Navajo Mountain with e-rate funds but was too expensive and was rejected by the FCC. With new funding they were able to get to Mexican Hat with the project near completion. The main issue they are experiencing are the delays due to right of ways that are making their permits at risk of being expired despite applied permit extensions. If they get all their permits approved, they could provide a backbone for NTUA and others. Emery is looking at other companies as customer and not competitors.
 - Mr. Tsosie and Christopher Curley provide a fiber update. They deal with funding and right of ways. Notes that policies are part of the hold up with the progress. Mr. Sandoval comments that we need to make it a point at the next meeting of the hold ups of right of ways and that those attending need to submit their issues/comments to forward to NN leadership.
- Cradlepoint - Rob Douglas, Sales Manager, Cradlepoint & Angel Benally, Tribal Affairs Specialist – FirstNet Program, AT&T:
 - Mr. Douglas presents a PowerPoint presentation on. He overviews Cradlepoint and their other services. They have partnered with other tribes and are hoping to partner with the Navajo Nation. They provide internet by cellular access if other options are not available. This is vital for law enforcement and staying connected. Their Cradlepoint can work with any router which makes it great for availability. It is ideal with sites that are temporary or that move frequently. AT&T has partnered with them for their 911 system.

Brent Nelson,

- Mr. Nelson gives a PowerPoint presentation on their partners and e-rate process. Fred Brakeman gave an update and an overview of e-rates and project statuses. With e-rates, they can make their projects affordable and hope to start construction on their projects. Currently, the State of Utah does not have a matching funds like Arizona and New Mexico have. None of their fiber builds are Navajo Nation owned. Mr. Nelson gives final comments on their presentation.

7. Open Discussion & Next Steps

- Derek Watchman comments: He supports the NN Diné Chamber of Commerce, and we need to consider using Navajo businesses and employment to help the Navajo people. The NN Economic Development website has a list of NN businesses.
- Corrine Wilson comments: She comments to their service and gives an overview of it.
- Joy Thompson comments: Gives acknowledgement to everyone here today and those that presented. Notes that we need to submit funds to the broadband office for them to expand. Also, wanted to know if there was an available strategy that they can comment on.
- Sonia Nez comments: She gave an introduction and a quick update of their office, including the addition of Tico Charlee.
- Patrick Sandoval comments: He would like to plan a meeting with Ms. Fowler, Ms. Nez, and Mr. Charlee to discuss things further.
- Mr. Begay comments: We need to coordinate to get things done and to keep people informed. They need to put together a package to present to the Navajo Nation.
- Next meeting: The next meeting will be in June due to the graduations in May. They are looking at June 2nd at Navajo Technical University for the next meeting date.

MEETING ENDS