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## Arizona, Navajo partner on broadband

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo Nation Council is partnering with Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona Governor's Office, Arizona Department of Transportation, and KPMG on buildout plans for broadband on the Navajo Nation, according to a news release.

"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," Arizona State Broadband Director Jeff Sobotka said in Tuesday news release.

The news release states the buildout plan proposes to expand long-haul and middle mile connectivity to unserved and underserved rural areas throughout Arizona.

The proposed infrastructure will provide a robust governance structure to be competitive for available federal broadband programs, which is in line with local and state strategic planning, according to the news release.

The Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, which was also in attendance, emphasized the need to provide capacity for the build out of broadband for education and telehealth purposes in line with statewide infrastructure plans.

The telecommunications regulatory commission reported that rural addressing will be more crucial than ever to complete for Navajo Arizona populations, the news release states. Rural addressing will assist in the implementation of E-911 services,

which were assigned for completion by the Navajo Divisions of Community Development and Public Safety.

The news release further states the telecommunications commission emphasized the need for the Navajo government to partner with its local service providers, such T-Mobile and the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, which is a Navajo government business.

"Connecting broadband and cell service to our Navajo people is the ultimate goal," Navajo Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. said. "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.

Begay, who represents the chapters of Low Mountain, Nazlini, Many Farms, Tachee/Blue Gap, and Tselani/Cottonwood, added, "We will continue to discuss and advocate to key state and federal stakeholders to make this happen."

The news release reported that Arizona will financially invest in infrastructure planning as it continues to encourage the Navajo Nation to reach out for resources that could help with broadband financial capacity for operation and maintenance expenses.