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DINÉ BI NAALTSOOS

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NTUA, General Services improve internet service for tribal offices

FORT DEFIANCE – A new partnership aims to improve the internet/broadband services for offices throughout the Navajo Nation, according to a Navajo Tribal Utility Authority news release.

NTUA and the Navajo Nation's Division of General Services announced the partnership on Monday.

For years, the Navajo government faced challenges with broadband and telecommunications infrastructure creating a digital divide among Navajo Nation offices.

Currently, an outside entity is providing broadband services to the Navajo Nation that is not meeting the bandwidth needs that tribal offices require.

The main offices in Window Rock have good bandwidth but satellite offices outside the capital do not. NTUA and General Services have reached an agreement to improve the primary problem – the lack of broadband bandwidth and its transport.

The agreement is a result of a short-term pilot program established last fall. The aim was to find a solution and take advantage of direct access to the 570-mile fiber optic broadband network built and operated by NTUA.

"Collaboration was key," said NTUA General Manager Walter Haase. "This is why NTUA

invested into building the fiber optic network in 2013. We knew that a broadband network would be needed to meet the growing technology needs of the Navajo Nation."

The agreement is two-fold, Haase said, providing better internet service and saving money.

General Services oversees the Department of Information Technology and the Navajo Nation Telecommunication and Utilities, which administer the broadband/internet network for tribal offices.

Under the agreement, the General Services will purchase bulk broadband from NTUA, allowing internal government offices to upgrade internet services, including public safety, fire department and chapter houses.

General Services will continue to increase bandwidth speed to meet the present and future needs for both government and economic development, said Joelynn Ashley, director of the division.

The initial cost would be about \$2 million.

The team believes that the establishment of this new service agreement will open the doors to numerous telecom applications and present opportunities for the Navajo Nation to pursue economic development initiatives.