



**Next Move Arizona
Statewide Listening Tour**

**North Central Arizona Transportation Experts Focus Group
Meeting Notes**

November 5, 2025

Attendees

ADOT and Consultant Team

- Matt Moul, Multimodal Planning Director
- Ruth Garcia, Regional Transportation Planner
- Kristin Darr, Consultant Team Facilitator
- Jennifer Love, Consultant Project Manager

Agency and Public Participants

- Dave Wessell, MetroPlan Flagstaff Transportation Planning Manager
- Eli Leslie, Navajo Nation Division of Transportation Senior Public Information Officer
- Heather Dalmolin, Mountain Line CEO and General Manager
- Jen O'Connor, Northern Arizona Council of Governments Planning Director
- Kate Morley, MetroPlan Flagstaff Executive Director
- Kim Austin, MetroPlan Flagstaff Transportation Demand Management
- ShaQuilla Yazzie, Navajo Nation Division of Transportation Planning Department Manager
- Shelby Dayzie, Navajo Nation Division of Transportation Deputy Division Director

Welcome

- Matt opened the meeting with a welcome, and Kristin kicked off the discussion.

Discussion

- Northern Arizona Council of Governments shared that the agency could try to help secure grant opportunities.
- Discussed enhancing state facilities to support the mobility needs of communities through access changes and Traffic Impact Analysis studies, for example, the need to create a safer experience for walking and biking to bus stops when crossings of state facilities are required (ex: at Humphries, where safe crossing from transit stop to school is not possible). On a similar note, discussed the need for solutions when a community identifies a need along an ADOT facility, for example a bus stop, that doesn't meet ADOT's criteria.
 - Generalized need to increase quality of communication and coordination across agencies and to cultivate more opportunities to discuss partnerships - not from a funding/financial standpoint – but from a policy perspective.



Participants noted that, when discussing transit, the policy coordination is a larger issue that the Arizona Transit Association has been working on statewide, but there is still a goal to work with ADOT to remove barriers to improving transit access.

- Shifting to the Navajo Nation, participants discussed the challenges associated with the Nation's size, including coordination needs across different counties and other jurisdictions, as well as the Nation's 110 chapters and other Navajo government processes.
 - An example provided was Uranium routes, which do not fall into Navajo regulatory authority and the appropriate authorities at the EPA have been challenging to coordinate with.
 - Multiple stakeholders were mentioned including the FHWA, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) NEPA process, and the need to follow all processes and regulations, including Navajo Nation's own processes, and that the FHWA has indicated that the process may be lengthy.
 - 90% of routes are BIA routes that did not previously follow regulatory compliance processes when built but are now subject to FHWA and other processes for maintenance and permitting.
 - Access issues were also discussed, noting the approximately 10,000-plus miles of dirt roads, and the fact that accessing needed services like educational and medical services on these roads can take a long time.
 - The Navajo Nation includes approximately 3,500 miles of paved roads, with the BIA-owned portion totaling 1,700 miles and 940 miles owned by ADOT.
 - There are three transportation planners in ShaQuilla's group who are responsible for the entirety of the Navajo Nation.
 - There is a need to educate constituents on how long it takes to get a route – an example is a road maintenance plan and a culvert installation plan that are currently underway which could support community education efforts.
 - Possibility of using gravel to improve dirt roads (versus paving), and that teams at Arizona State University and the University of New Mexico are researching new types of surface treatment but have not tested on various types of soils.
 - Issues with flooding were discussed, as much of the Nation's land is in a flood zone. Some of these areas are traditionally used for farming and have canals but it's important that roadway projects consider farming and access needs in drainage design.
 - The Nation is working with FEMA and FHWA on some issues related to flooding, for example, a bridge project in Kayenta was washed away in a storm.
 - The conversation shifted to safety considerations in the Navajo Nation area, particularly with regard to tourism needs. Mentioned:
 - Needed widening of shoulders and turnout lanes.
 - Improvements on I-40, State Route 264 and US Route 191.
 - Needed enforcement when there is a road closure, and consideration of impacts to local routes resulting from closures.



- Safety concerns, pavement wear, need striping and visibility concerns on State Route 99, State Route 177 and State Route 77.
 - Safety concerns resulting from high speeds on US Route 160 for tourism, noting that it is not a safe place for turnouts.
 - Cost of the tribal transportation improvement program at \$3.5 million/mile (\$4.5-\$5 million/mile current costs).
 - Concern that tribal routes are lower ranking statewide but are key routes for Navajo mobility and stalled or deferred improvement needs can be very detrimental to community, as well as tourists who get lost or stuck.
 - A corridor study being developed by the Hopi in collaboration with ADOT.
 - Discussion of the importance of increasing education and the Nation's work to build toolkits, but that at the same time, there are many jurisdictional issues to navigate.
 - Efforts are underway to build Navajo DOT planning departments.
- A participant noted that rural needs are so overwhelming that prioritization is difficult.
 - Northern Arizona Council of Governments applied for a safety grant and the agency is trying to develop a list of projects in the Many Farms/Black Rock and Chinle areas.
 - The discussion shifted back to the need to address access across ADOT facilities in communities, and the transformation of design standards that needs to take place to address bicycle and pedestrian connectivity within neighborhoods and communities.
 - Chattanooga MPO's process of prioritizing projects by scale through size and type groupings was mentioned.
 - The concept of transferring routes in order to reassess/reassign who manages roads in different areas was discussed as a topic that should continue to be discussed, in addition to the financial implications of the process. Reassignment may ease issues like establishing safe bicycle and pedestrian crossings and navigating related regulatory issues. Discussions would address which agency is best able to pay for and manage facilities, how to practically make transfers happen, financial implications of transfers and the potential for phasing management changes.
 - Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity continued to be an important topic of conversation, and a participant mentioned several states that each have a statewide bicycle plan. Another participant mentioned that a statewide network may not be applicable as there are other needs to address, but intercity networks could be a priority. A specific example of a current issue was at Chinle, where a police officer must be stationed outside of a school in order to ensure students can cross safely.
 - Increasing development and growth have led to safety issues, with a participant noting that safety statistics are worsening and the funding to address safety issues limited. There was concern that local representatives hold accountability for local safety issues but do not have the oversight structure or funding to address issues.
 - The conversation returned to the challenge of siloed communications. Lack of awareness of the owners of different types of facilities, different rules and regulations in different jurisdictions, the fact that projects can cross these jurisdictions, and the general need to find better ways to communicate and coordinate across agencies.



- Similar challenges with siloed communications were described from a Navajo DOT perspective, particularly challenges related to Bureau of Indian Affairs routes. Tribal coordination meetings and Memorandums of Agreement/intergovernmental agreements were both mentioned as tools to address communication and project needs. It was noted that communication silos must be broken down not just to develop solutions, but to even properly understand issues. Navajo DOT planners are working to establish contacts and increase coordination, it's important to acknowledge that communities may not engage due to lack of/challenges with engagement historically.
- Desire communicated to ensure the concept of mobility – for people, not cars – is well represented in the vision statement. It's important to acknowledge that transportation solutions should address use of bikes, pedestrians and transit, particularly to get support from local partners.
- A participant noted that a statewide transit funding source is needed.
- Discussion revisited that ADOT routes sometimes serve as local roadways and that the focus on moving vehicles at higher speeds may not align well with roadways in these urban environments. Using the Milton example, participants discussed how, if the road were locally owned/operated, local multimodal recommendations could be enacted and developers could be engaged to manage traffic impacts that result from redevelopment projects.
 - Participants wondered if a different set of standards could be developed to address ADOT facilities in urban environments, in addition to the concept of ADOT releasing control to locals for facilities in urban areas. Overall, the need for flexibility was reiterated.
 - Agreements could address liability issues.
 - Need for structure to address policy issues and the value of localized knowledge to increase efficiency in decision-making regarding ADOT facilities that have use as local thoroughfares.
 - ADOT facilities are “main streets” in some communities, and more context sensitivity is needed to protect and accommodate the needs of vulnerable road users in these environments.
- Data collection was discussed as a possible tool for breaking down silos, with counties in a role to collect data on aspects of roadways like pavement condition, and ADOT in a role to support rural communities with data collection outside of state-owned facilities. These data-sharing roles would increase connections between ADOT and communities.
- Participants turned to discussion on the project prioritization process.
 - Northern Arizona Council of Governments has developed a regional priority list and advocate at the legislative level, with the Regional Transportation Plan noted as a good place to start when working to introduce and prioritize projects.
 - MPO's generally have large project lists but even those don't capture everything.
 - Navajo DOT has 24 delegates that serve in advocacy roles, and they look at route prioritization factors like how many people are served, whether it's a



school route or provides access to medical facilities. It was acknowledged that even this process is imperfect with advocates picking their own projects, not always the best priority projects.

- Arizona's P2P process was mentioned as a one-size-fits-all process that may miss important needs.
- The statewide infrastructure report (ASCE report card) was mentioned as an advocacy tool.
- County engineers may have good lists but the projects may not be based on a needs assessment but rather be strategically selected.
- The Navajo process for funding/ranking projects was described:
 - The tribal transportation improvement program included approximately 60 projects in 2021 valued at \$3.1 million, with the need at \$200 million-plus. Meaning, of all of the projects/needs that were put forward, only approximately 60 were identified to be met.
 - Projects start at chapter level, then get brought up to compete against all other chapters to move forward.
- Safety was discussed as a high-priority need.
 - The Navajo Nation's mortality report includes intentional injuries/crashes, at the highest. In the Navajo Nation, distances traveled are greater so as a result, there is a higher likelihood of crashes.
 - 53% of crashes on Navajo land happen in Arizona, and several facilities were noted as facilities with high crash routes on Navajo land.
 - Participants reinforced that when ADOT-owned facilities provide major thoroughfares in urban areas, there are increased incidents for vulnerable road users who interact with the facility.
- As a final topic, the conversation turned to intercity rail, with the Phoenix-Tucson route noted as a positive for whole state.
 - Increased rail would provide options in state, in addition to I-10, as well as transportation choices for tourists and residents. Rail was also noted as a possible gateway for other multimodal connections. Participants noted that the widening roads alone will not meet demand; modes that move people more efficiently are needed.
 - A participant noted that intercity rail would support education and opportunities for younger generations.
- Earlier in the discussion, defining a need was surfaced, and a participant pointed out that better education of stakeholders and elected officials on what a need is would be beneficial as administrations and leadership structures change, pointing out that Navajo Nation president and council elections occur in 2026.

Key Takeaways

- Need to increase focus on community mobility needs when interacting with state-owned facilities, for example, vulnerable road users who cross state facilities to get to community destinations, as well as multimodal uses of state-owned facilities. Support for focusing on moving people – not just cars.



- Support for more robust partnerships on policy and standards with a focus on creating more pathways to process and managing jurisdictional issues/processes. Discussion on crafting a different set of standards for state-owned facilities in urban environments/communities.
- Desire to examine the project prioritization process with a lens of importance to local communities and tourism – projects that rank lower in statewide prioritization may be critical to community function and/or safety.
- Need for increased education for the public and elected officials on the transportation project development process.
- Discussion on better utilization of existing communications tools and channels.
- Need for network redundancy in communities to support incident management (weather, crashes).