

**Indian Affairs Committee Meeting
July 20, 2016**

**New Mexico Highway 118 Safety Concerns
Talking Points**

Derrick Watchman, CEO, Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise

- Introduction of self/position
- Thank you Mr. Chairman, and members of the Indian Affairs Committee for being here today and for listening to our concerns regarding New Mexico Highway 118. And, thank you, Representative Johnson for making this issue a top priority.
- By way of background, New Mexico Highway 118, formally Route 66, is a rural roadway. The current land uses along the roadway include residential, industrial, educational, recreational and hospitality/entertainment. There are also several tracks of land under private ownership.
- In addition to local Church Rock community users, the roadway provides connectivity to commerce, education, medical treatment and employment opportunities for surrounding communities of Pinedale, Mariano Lake, Smith Lake and Crownpoint Chapter, including others.
- While certain engineering standards govern rural roadways, and the data from recent Traffic Impact Analyses do not support road improvements, we have, in recent years, sadly seen two fatalities, numerous accidents and near misses, often times involving pedestrians.
- We are here today to seek your support for implementation of remedial measures to help enhance road safety along the roadway. Some measure may include striping, rumble strips, street lighting and sidewalks. We also know that drivers exceed the posted speed limit on this roadway, and enforcement of the speed limit is badly needed.
- We also want to share with you that we are working collaboratively with many governmental and private entities including McKinley County, the City of Gallup, the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation, the Navajo Division of Public Safety, the Church Rock Chapter and local businesses.
- It is our hope that we too can obtain your support to ensure that measures are implemented to make this roadway safe for all. Development is occurring in the area and we can expect more traffic and more pedestrians along the roadway. It makes sense, to do whatever is necessary and reasonable to protect those individuals now and in the future.
- In closing, I do want to share with you at a recent stakeholders meeting, that the New Mexico Department of Transportation agreed to conduct a Road Safety Audit, of which we are extremely thankful. The Audit will likely be completed in October and we look forward to the findings. Additionally, in previous meetings with the New Mexico Department of Transportation, the Navajo Nation Natural Resources Committee Chairman, Mr. Alton Shepherd committed to ensure that if any approvals or rights of way are needed for the road safety improvements on Highway 118, the Nation would do so.
- Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Indian Affairs Committee.