

NaaTsis' Aan-Oljato Road
San Juan County, Utah
July 17, 2020
Seven County Infrastructure Coalition Meeting

Summary: The NaaTsis' Aan community continues to wait on the completion of the Highway to connect NaaTsis' Aan and Oljato communities. This road plan was initiated in the 1960s, with a vision by the community members that they would be able to drive and visit family members east of NaaTsis' Aan. Prior to the road development, there were horse trails that crossed these canyon lands for yearly migrations and trading endeavors with other communities and other tribal members.

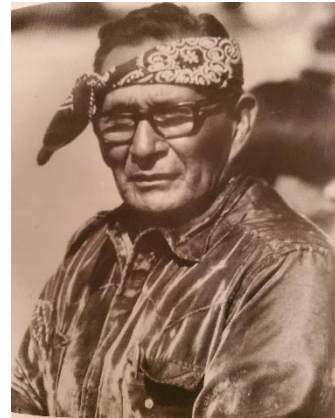
In the early 1960s Harold Drake, an ambitious young leader came home and was elected as a community leader. Through his leadership and help from local members of the community, plans began to establish a road across Piute Canyon.

That road now serves as our community bus routes, emergency access, Law Enforcement response and community transportation system for (60) Sixty years to this day. Today, it requires a major rehabilitation to provide a safer travel route between Rainbow Village and Piute Mesa. In 2001 the community lost (3) three young people in Piute Canyon when their vehicle ran off the canyon wall due to the road conditions. Winter months and other adverse weather conditions impacts travel for local community members in case of emergencies.

With his leadership, he empowered the community this vision of road development to the community and secured funding to start construction of the road. These families were young and full of energy because it created job opportunities and a better way of life. Even though uneducated, they were willing to learn to operate mobile equipment, air powered tools and other items through the duration of the road construction. There were only 4 people who owned an automobile prior to the road construction. After the completion of the road, local members of the community started purchasing automobiles, which made traveling much faster and transporting of essential needs more adequate.

We have strong leadership today, with the same ambition, enthusiasm and optimistic outlook in tackling our predecessors dreams and completing this endeavor. We have the equipment, engineering, and technology to commence where our past leadership completed for the betterment of wellbeing of the public health within this region.

Needs: It is estimated that over 50% of homes on the Navajo Nation are without reliable water and/or power, adequate transportation systems, and many must travel long distances for food. The reason for this is their isolation. The Navajo Nation, Tribal entities will not be able to provide services to many of these homes anytime in the foreseen future, because of geographic and cost constraint. At stake is the traditional culture of the Navajo people living in this region.



Problem: At the Tribal level, there are multiple agencies and organizations with transportation oversight. Although each have separate missions with limited authority to assist. The Navajo Nation Office of the President & Vice-President have expressed support of the NaaTsis' Aan-Oljato road developments. It is unknown what the position of the Bureau of Indian Affairs has in this development. Establishments of Right-of -Ways for the road alignment most likely will be secured with the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation where collaboration has already started.

Conclusion: With the uncertainty of the Pandemic the country is facing, we continue to lose families to the COVID-19 especially our elderlies who had envisioned witnessing the completion of the Highway between NaaTsis' Aan and Oljato. Below are bullet points of positive alternatives with implementation of the road development:

- Elderlies witness the completion of Highway
- Employment opportunities
- Commerce Development opportunities
- Resort/Tourism opportunities
- Adequate School Bus Routes
- Improve San Juan School District student services
- Adequate Emergency Response (Medical, Law Enforcement, Mobilization of Emergency)
- Establish Toll Road/Preserve area
- Dedicate Highway to Law Enforcements
- Bridge San Juan River
- Shorten Travel to major Interstates/cities
- Use of Utah Water Settlement
- Extend Scenic-By-Way of Highway 95
- Promote Economic Development
- Access to better equipped Health Care Facilities

Submitted by: Hank Stevens, NaaTsis' Aan Chapter