

Local communities to benefit from the new Lok'aah Ni Teel Shopping Center

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GANADO, Ariz. – Members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council had the honor of joining local residents as the community of Ganado celebrated the grand opening of the Lok'aah Ni Teel Shopping Center located at Burnside Junction, which is approximately 40-miles west of Window Rock, Ariz July 11.

The new 35,000 square-foot building currently houses a Lowe's Shop N' Save, Pizza Edge, ACE Hardware, and Laundromat. A Subway will soon be added as well.

Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) congratulated the Ganado Chapter and thanked his Council colleagues, Ganado Chapter officials, Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development, and others for striving to complete the project.

"Thanks to the hard work of these individuals and to my colleagues on the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, we are seeing the fruits of the Permanent Trust Fund income and now many of the local residents don't have to travel very far for groceries or basic necessities," said Delegate Damon.

The shopping center was one of numerous projects funded by the Permanent Trust Fund Income Five-Year Expenditure Plan in 2016, when the 23rd Navajo Nation Council approved \$150 million for economic development projects, agricultural development projects, and water infrastructure development across the Navajo Nation. The expenditure plan provided \$9.2 million for the shopping center.

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Delegate Damon, who chairs the Budget and Finance Committee, described how he and the committee worked to develop the five-year plan, which also included various projects in the communities of Dennehotso, Shonto, Shiprock, Crownpoint, Wheatfields, and others, which will create over 100 jobs, he added.

Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat), who represents the Ganado community, joined Ganado Chapter president Vince James in praising and thanking the family of Ethel Myers who consented to land withdrawals within the family's grazing area to allow for the construction of the shopping center.

Delegate Shepherd also stated that the new project is a sign of progress for the community and acknowledged that more needs to be done to create more economic development for the Navajo Nation, including amending current laws and policies at the federal level that discourage companies from starting businesses on the Nation.

"As leaders, we will continue to work with congressional members because there are federal laws that need to be changed because outside companies don't want to do business on Navajo due to dual taxation," said Delegate Shepherd, who also thanked many past leaders who he said had a "vision" for the community and for the Nation.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) said the new shopping center is an example of how the 23rd Navajo Nation Council is fulfilling the priorities that were established when the current Council took office in 2015. He noted that in addition to the \$150 million five-year plan the Council has also approved \$180 million for major water projects across the Navajo Nation and \$100 million for chapter projects.

Other guest speakers at the event included President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Ganado Chapter president Vince James, and Lowe's Market CEO Roger Lowe, Jr. The new Lok'aah Ni Teel Shopping Center is currently open to the public.