

Fiscal impact reports (FIRs) are prepared by the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) for standing finance committees of the NM Legislature. The LFC does not assume responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

Current FIRs (in HTML & Adobe PDF formats) are available on the NM Legislative Website ([legis.state.nm.us](http://legis.state.nm.us)). Adobe PDF versions include all attachments, whereas HTML versions may not. Previously issued FIRs and attachments may be obtained from the LFC in Suite 101 of the State Capitol Building North.

## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR	<u>Ulibarri</u>	ORIGINAL DATE	<u>2/2/09</u>	HB	<u></u>
		LAST UPDATED	<u></u>		
SHORT TITLE	<u>Improve Navajo Route 55</u>	SB	<u>SM 8</u>		
		ANALYST	<u>Burns</u>		

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From  
Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Memorial 8 is a request to the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs to conduct a feasibility study for the improvement of Navajo Route 55 to Interstate 40 as soon as possible.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

SM 8 would request the federal BIA agency to conduct a feasibility study for improving Navajo Route 55 and for the agency to schedule the improvement of this route at the earliest possible opportunity. The BIA administrates and manages 66 million acres of land held in trust by the United States for American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives; BIA's administration and management includes the building and maintaining of roads on a reservation such as Navajo Route 55.<sup>1</sup>

### OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

According to testament to the New Mexico Interim Indian Affairs Committee in August 2007, the road to the Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation between the chapter house and State Route 6 and Interstate 40 is impassible for many motorists.<sup>2</sup> Alamo residents are forced to travel much longer distances through Magdalena and Socorro to reach Albuquerque and other parts of the state.<sup>3</sup> Completion of the remaining sixteen miles of Navajo Route 55 north to connect the chapter to State Route 6 and Interstate 40 would increase safe access to the chapter, benefit the health, safety, and welfare of Alamo residents and decrease the cost of travel to and from the Alamo chapter to other parts of the State. SM 8 also asserts that reliable road access to the Alamo chapter will help promote economic development within Socorro and Valencia counties.

<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs website. Homepage. Retrieved January 30, 2009, <http://www.doi.gov/bia/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Mexicano, Buddy (Chapter President of the Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation). "Testimony to the Interim Indian Affairs Committee on a Status Update of the Alamo Chapter". Tex from: the Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Interim Indian Affairs Committee, August 13-15, 2007. Retrieved Jan. 30, 2009, <http://legis.state.nm.us/lcs/minutes/iacminaug13.07.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Senate Memorial 8 – Page 2

Navajo Route 55 is a designated Indian Reservation Roads (“IRR”) and it was funded through the Indian Reservation Road Program, which is jointly administered by the BIA and the Federal Highway Administration. IRR are public roads that provide access to and within Indian reservations, trust land, restricted Indian land, and Alaska Native villages. According to the National Congress of American Indians, these roads make up 26.3 percent of all existing roads in the federal-aid highway system, yet historically, they have received less than 1 percent of all federal highway dollars.<sup>4</sup> IRR roads receive on average only \$500 per mile compared to \$2,200 per mile spent to maintain federal roads, with an additional \$2,500 to \$4,000 per mile spent by states.<sup>5</sup> NCAI believes that due to this low funding, many reservation roads are not sufficiently maintained and they are often shut down for winter or due to inclement weather. Consequently, these roads provide unreliable transportation and hinders a tribe’s ability to attract business and provide emergency services and bus children safely to school.<sup>6</sup>

### **WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL**

The New Mexico State Senate would not express the state’s desire for the federal BIA to conduct a feasibility study and improve the conditions of Navajo Route 55 to Alamo Chapter.

KJB/mc

---

<sup>4</sup> National Congress of American Indians. “*Immediate Action Needed To Restore Indian Roads Funding*” NCAI Update, July 10, 2001. Retrieved Jan. 30, 2009, <http://www.ncai.org/ncai/advocacy/otherissue/docs/368.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.