

Tuesday, May 19, 2009

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall, and Representative Ben Ray Luján, today announced Ramah Navajo Chapter is the nation's first Tribe to receive direct road repair funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Ramah is expected to receive more than \$644,000 from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to help resurface approximately 10 miles of Ramah Navajo Route 25 – also known as Veterans Highway – on the tribe's 168,000-acre reservation.

"This significant grant will improve Ramah Navajo Route 25, making it safer for all who travel on it," **Bingaman** said. "I am very glad that New Mexico is the first recipient of funding from this very important Indian Rural Roads initiative."

"The rural roads and transportation infrastructure on the Ramah Navajo route need dramatic improvement," said **Udall**. "I am pleased a tribe from New Mexico will be the first in the nation to receive recovery funding to use towards the improvement of the Veterans Highway and create jobs in an area that desperately needs economic development."

"This project will help the Ramah Navajo Chapter not only by fixing roads, but also by putting people to work. It is another encouraging example of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act making a difference in our communities," said **Luján**.

Funding was made available through the FHWA's Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) program, which helps address transportation needs on tribal lands. Bingaman led the effort – and was joined by Udall - to include IRR funding in the ARRA bill.

In 2006, the Ramah Navajo Chapter was among one of the first Tribes in the nation to sign an

IRR Program Agreement to allow Tribes to work directly with FHWA for their IRR Program funding instead of contracting with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs.