

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan

Version 1.0

1.0 The Turquoise Trail

1.1 HOW DID THE TURQUOISE TRAIL GET ITS NAME?

Who would have guessed that it would be almost twenty years before the stretch of NM 14 from Tijeras to Santa Fe would have a proper name. Efforts to promote this area began in 1956 when the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce held a contest to name the scenic drive up then Hwy 10, through Cibola Forest, down the north side of the mountains, into Placitas, north to Santo Domingo Pueblo and Coronado Monument and ending in Historic Old Town.

Rex Borough, the chairman of the chamber's tourist committee hit upon the idea of a naming contest. Local merchants donated the prizes which included Navajo rugs from Fred Thompson's Trading Post at Santo Domingo as well as sets of luggage and assorted craft items. The prizes were displayed in the window of the Public Service Company on Central Avenue in Albuquerque. The statewide contest brought in over 700 entries, all of which the committee opened, read and discussed. "There were some good choices," remembers Rex Borough, "'Old Mining Trail,' was one and several others had a ghost town theme, but when we opened up 'Turquoise Trail,' I could see the whole group relax -- they had a name." The contest winner, Corrales writer, Ruth Armstrong, stated the name was partly suggested by the extensive turquoise mining in the area.

Naming, it seems was not enough to keep the trail active and by 1975, in an effort to rejuvenate the area and create a destination for tourists, the naming process was revisited by Mel Johnson (currently of Johnson's of Madrid) and John Cudek. Mel and John sent a petition to the State Highway and Transportation Department suggesting that the route, now shortened to include only NM 14 from Tijeras to Santa Fe and the short branch of NM 536 leading to the Sandia Crest, be named "Ghost Town Trail." Both the Highway and Transportation Department and the Department of Economic Development suggested that as the road was and had been known locally as the Turquoise Trail, attempts to designate an official name should be confined to the support of the "Turquoise Trail." Sensing an opportunity, Mel and John renewed their efforts in support of "Turquoise Trail" and, on December 5, 1975, a resolution was adopted by the New Mexico State Highway Commission which officially designated the road as a scenic route and recommended that signs, reading "Turquoise Trail" be placed at intervals along the road. In April of 1996, with the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation adoption, the name of the Turquoise Trail became official.

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan

Version 1.0

1.2 MORE THAN ONE TURQUOISE TRAIL?

The original Turquoise Trail was the brainchild of the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce and then tourism committee chairman, Rex Borough. Beginning and ending in historic Old Town, the trail wound up Hwy. 10 through the Cibola Forest, down the north side of the mountains into Placitas and north to the Santo Domingo Pueblo and Coronado Monument. Tour buses took travelers on a days journey through history and gorgeous scenery. The Chamber of Commerce publicized this area heavily during the late 50's and early 60's, but gradually visitor response decreased and the Turquoise Trail tours ended.

In 1975, efforts to rejuvenate tourism along NM Hwy. 14, brought a new curve to the Turquoise Trail. John Cudek and Mel Johnson lobbied heavily to designate the stretch of NM 14 from Tijeras through Golden, Madrid and Cerrillos and up to Santa Fe as the Turquoise Trail. Early response to the naming was positive, but with a change in County Commissioners and a dip in overall visitors to the state, the life of the second Turquoise Trail was brief.

Perhaps it was a belief in the old adage that “the third time is the charm,” that led a small group of people headed (again!) by Rex Borough to form the Turquoise Trail Association in 1983. The Association worked to designate the section of NM Hwy 14 north from the Tijeras Forest Service station to the border of Santa Fe and including the branch of NM 536 to the Sandia Crest as a scenic byway. The group, consisting of area business owners, including Ross and Carla Ward of Tinkertown, Sherry Perry of the Sandia Crest House, Pete Jojola of Pete's Restaurant, Joni Conrad-Neutra of Madrid Earthenware Pottery, Ede Salkeld-Cato of the Mine Shaft Tavern, and E.J. “Mitch” Mitchell of the What Not Shop in Cerrillos, joined together in support of continued tourist traffic, preservation of scenic and historic areas, and overall promotion of the Turquoise Trail as a specific destination. Thirty years and three different trails later, Rex Borough (formerly chair of the Tourism Committee of the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce) took on the role of first President of the Turquoise Trail Association.

1.3 WHAT MAKES THE TURQUOISE TRAIL A SCENIC BYWAY?

The Turquoise Trail was officially designated as one of the state's fifteen scenic byways in 1996. The designation provided for signs along the Turquoise Trail as well as inclusion in the state's scenic byway website and promotional literature. The uniquely scenic stretch of road includes the historic mining towns of Golden, Madrid and Cerrillos as well as a myriad of attractions, restaurants and shopping opportunities. Along the 62 mile route you'll find the The Museum of Archaeology and Material Culture which features a 12,000 year time-line telling the story of North

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan

Version 1.0

America's earliest inhabitants through the battle of Wounded Knee. The magical world of Tinkertown Museum includes a miniature animated western town and circus, and proves that even every day items can be transformed by imagination and creativity into something unique and wonderful. Cozy lodging can be found at Elaine's Bed and Breakfast, a gorgeous log home situated high in the hills to take full advantage of mountain views. NM 536 takes visitors through several ecosystems to the top of the Sandias where winter skiing and summer mountain biking possibilities await at the Sandia Peak Ski Area. The scent of Ponderosa and the chance to glimpse big horn sheep make this drive particularly stunning. The Sandia Peak Tramway travels from the top of the mountain down into Albuquerque, making it the longest aerial tramway in the world. The drive north from Sandia Park is wonderful in any season, taking you through some of the most spectacular scenery in the USA. The play of the setting sun on gently rolling hills and distant mesas is reason enough for scenic byway designation. Remnants of the west can be found as you walk the dusty streets of Golden, Madrid, and Cerrillos. Local arts and crafts are showcased in eclectic galleries and shops and several dining possibilities make the Turquoise Trail a truly unique destination. It is said that all the gold has been mined from the hills and while this may be true, in its place is an irreplaceable vein rich in creativity, imagination, originality, and imbued with the free thinking spirit of the Old West.

1.4 THE TURQUOISE TRAIL -- YESTERDAY AND TODAY

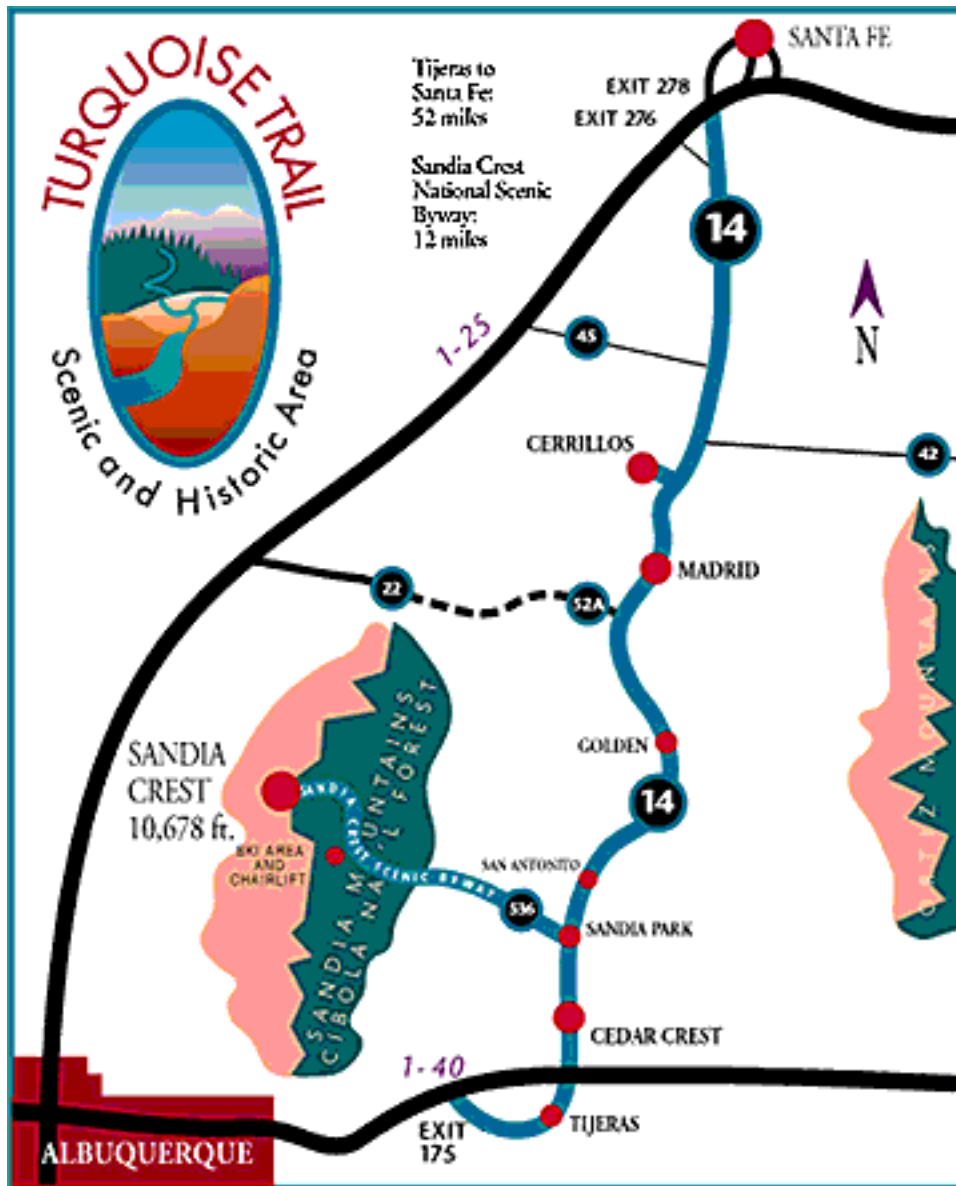
The Turquoise Trail Association has come a long way since 1983. The first meeting, held at Pete's Home of the Half-Breed in Sandia Park provided a glimpse of the enthusiasm that would carry this group to greater success over the course of time. The Association that started with only a handful of interested members has grown in numbers and today, exceeds 65 members. Carla Ward remembers the first attempts at fund raising. "We tried to take up a collection at the meeting and everyone was sort of hemming and hawing and suddenly, Ross stood up and said, 'I have a hundred dollars -- who's going to join me?' That's all we needed, suddenly everyone had money in their hands. We raised over \$700.00 at that first meeting. These days, along with membership dues and proceeds from the annual fund raising auction, the Turquoise Trail Association has been honored with a large grant from the Federal Highway and Transportation Department as well as money from the New Mexico Department of Tourism. Portions of these grants are included in an advertising budget of over \$30,000. The grant money has allowed the Association to print 200,000 copies of their 4-color brochure (up from 1984 by 190,000) and has also been used toward placing a display kiosk at the Albuquerque International Sunport. The Association has big plans for the future, including increased promotion along with constant protection of scenic and historic resources and an application for All American Road designation.

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan

Version 1.0

1.5 ROADWAY AND RIGHT OF WAY

The easy-to-read map provided by the Turquoise Trail Association gives you a feel of just where the Turquoise Trail is; however, you are warned that if you don't know where New Mexico is, it will be a problem. Each month, New Mexico Magazine publishes, "One of our 50 is Missing." giving comical examples of what people know, or more specifically, don't know, about the Land of Enchantment.



The Turquoise Trail
1-4

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan

Version 1.0

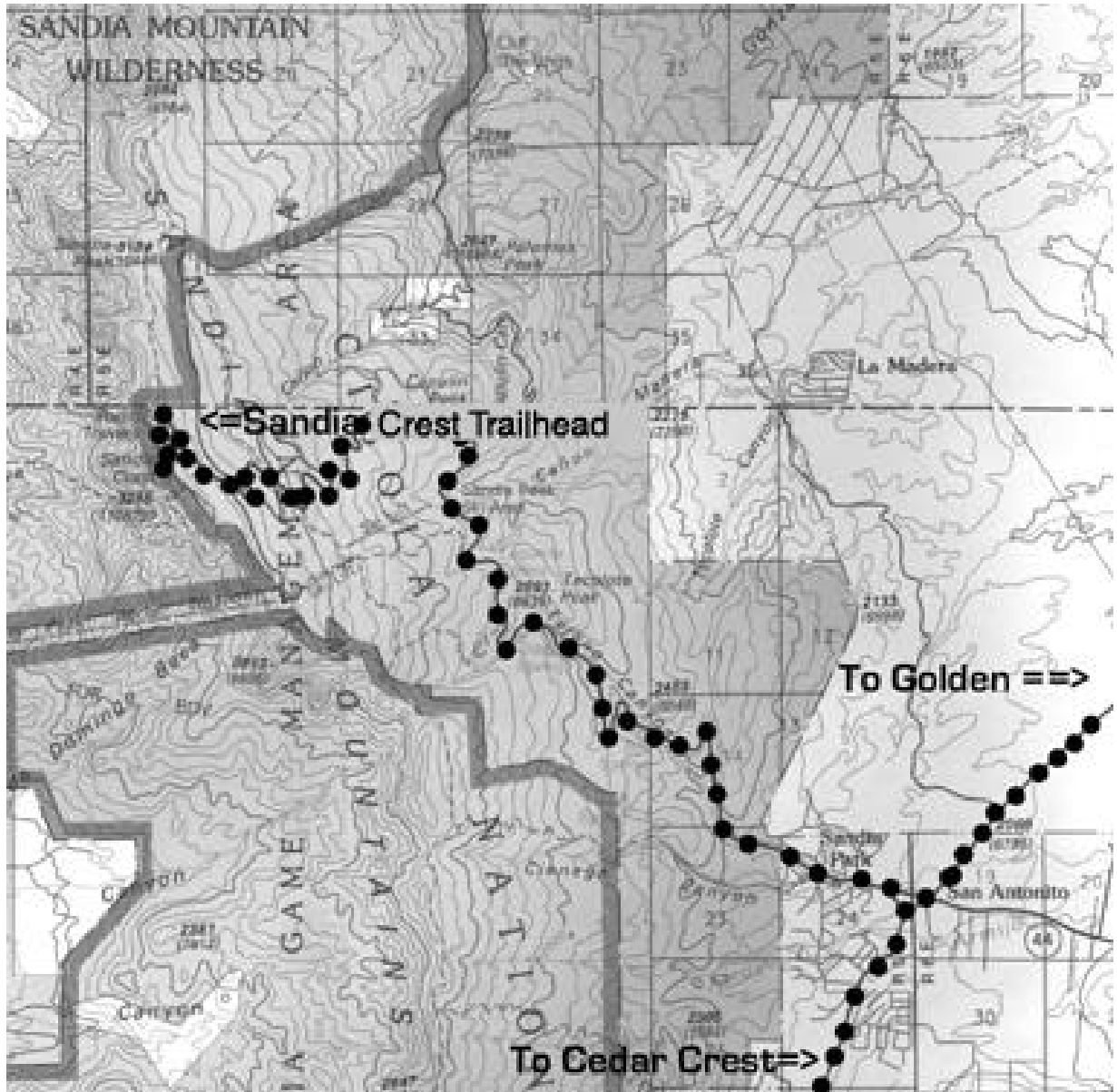
Excerpts from BLM and USGS 1:100,000 maps give a more standardized view of the Turquoise Trail Scenic Byway. The following five topographic maps are marked to give the termini (endpoints) of the byway including the spur to Sandia Crest.



The Turquoise Trail
1-5

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

The following map shows the NM 536 spur to the top of Sandia Crest.



Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

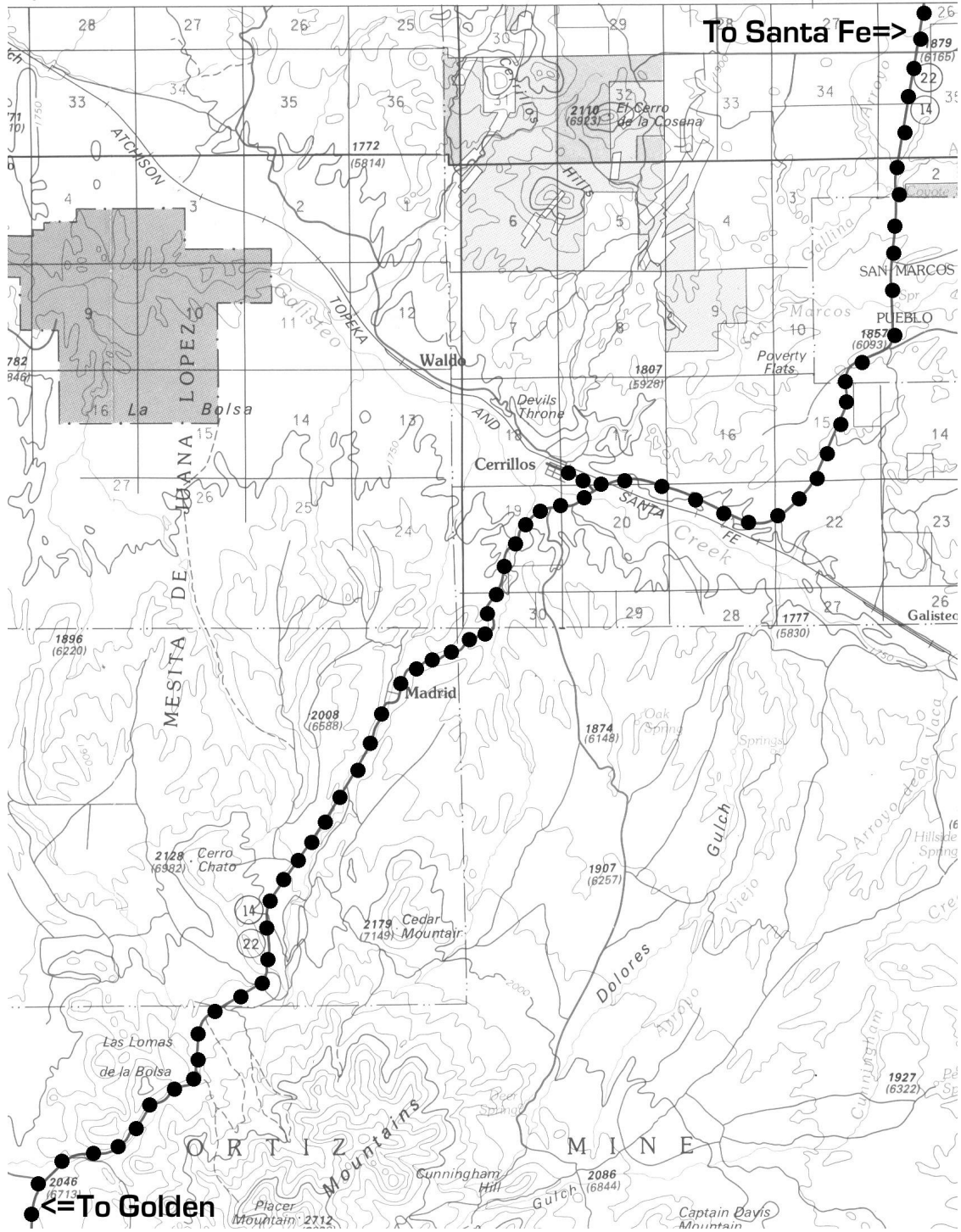
The Golden section lies between Sandia Park and Madrid.



The Turquoise Trail
1-7

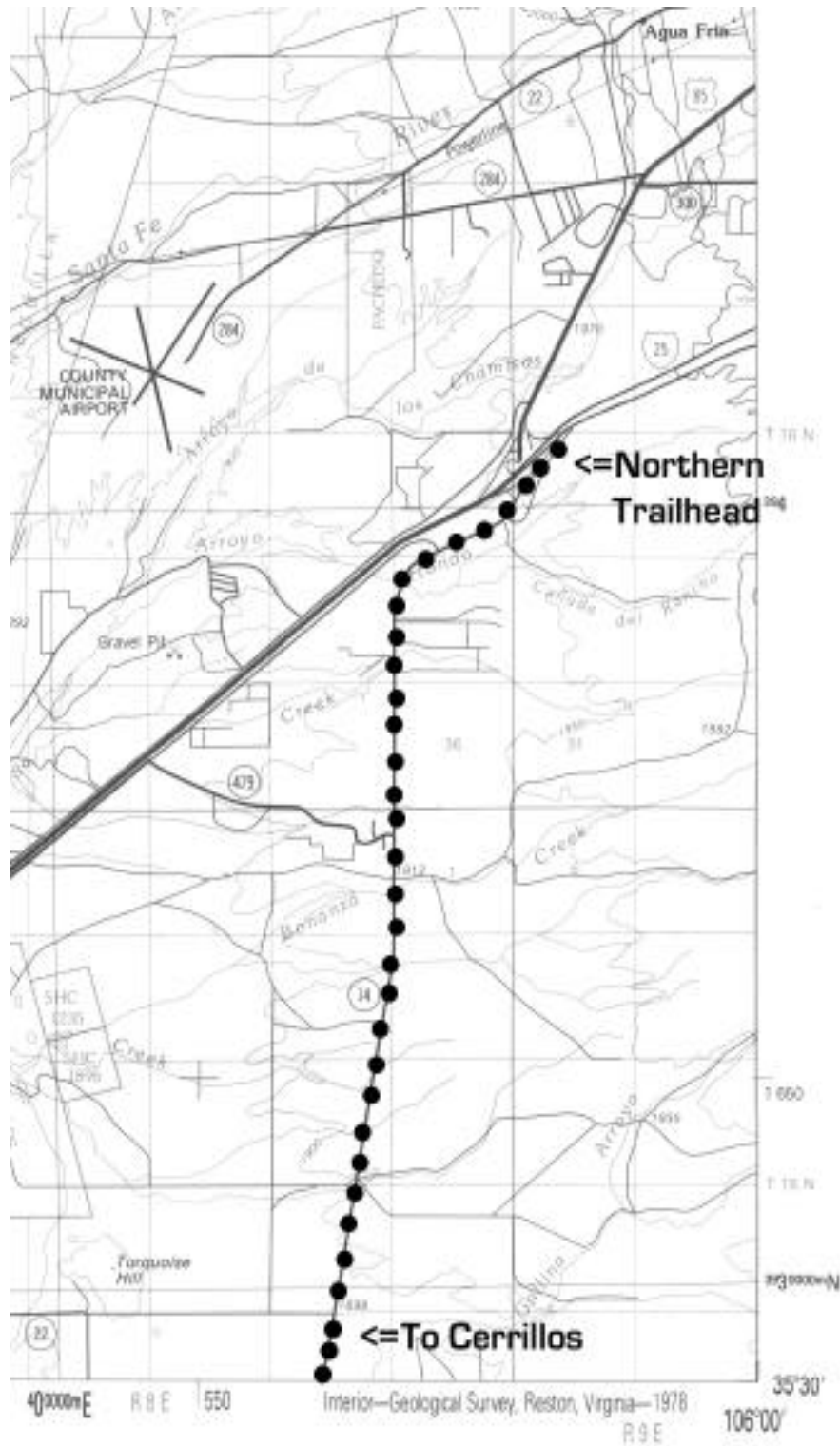
Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

The Madrid, Cerrillos, and San Marcos segment of the Turquoise Trail.



Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

The Northern Trailhead at the intersection of NM 14 and Interstate 25 in Santa Fe.



Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

For more details about the byway's intrinsic qualities, please see Chapter 5 of this plan and the user friendly maps in Appendix A.

THE SOUTHERN TRAILHEAD TO THE INTERSECTION OF NM 14 AND NM 536

In a land not so far, far, away, a visitor will find NM 14. That's N for New and M for Mexico according to the United States Postal Service. We don't know where the 14 came from, but we know it used to be Route 10. Maybe the 10 stood for ten cars a year. Just imagine what it was like to drive the Cedar Crest segment of the byway in 1922, less than ten years after New Mexico became a state.



Well, it's not 1922 anymore and Route 10 is now New Mexico State Highway 14, possibly the most traveled State Highway in New Mexico. Each day more than 12,000 vehicles pass a point just north of Interstate 40. That's as many cars as drive the Big Sur Coast Highway, an All American Road, near Carmel, CA. The Turquoise Trail is truly a destination for many.

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

Depending on your point of view, the Turquoise Trail Scenic Byway either starts or ends at the Cibola National Forest Ranger Station in Tijeras about one mile south of Interstate 40, exit 175. The byway's road lanes are typically 12 feet wide with only a few feet of hard shoulder on either side of the road. As you head north from the ranger station, the road is two lanes wide up to a stop sign where the Turquoise Trail meets Historic Route 66. From the intersection, the two scenic roads run concurrently for about one mile until the Turquoise Trail turns north and Route 66 heads east. About a half mile before the roads diverge, NM 14 turns into four lanes. After passing under Interstate 40, NM 14 becomes a four-lane divided highway with a center turn lane in some portions of the road. There are no physical barriers, just yellow striping to divide the road. The four lanes continue to the intersection of NM 536 in Sandia Park. A double-wide asphalt sideway acts as a bike trail along this section. There is even a horse trail on the west side of the byway around milepost 2.

INTERSECTION OF NM 14 AND NM 536 TO THE SANDIA CREST TRAILHEAD

Everyone wants to see the view from the top of the Turquoise Trail--Sandia Crest. To do that, head west from the intersection of NM 14 and NM 536 in Sandia Park. It's all uphill from here, 13.6 miles (22 kilometers) of winding, rolling, switching back and forth through the Sandia Mountains, all the way from 7,000 feet to 10,600 feet. If you get out of your vehicle at the visitor center at the top, you will be rewarded with a 360 degree panorama standing 10,678 feet above sea level. Thousands of years ago you could have seen the sun rise in the east and set in the west across a vast ocean. In 1945, you may have seen the flash from the explosion of the first atomic blast. In 1947 you might have seen the aliens crash land in Roswell, and today on every clear evening (of which there are many), you can see the city lights of Albuquerque glow as airplanes blink across the sky. Who knows what the future will bring? If California and Arizona sank, you would be looking down at the Pacific Ocean from more than two miles up.

INTERSECTION OF NM 14 AND NM 536 TO THE NORTHERN TRAILHEAD

As you head north on NM 14 from its intersection with NM 536, the road is two lanes wide as you pass through the towns of Golden, Madrid, Cerrillos, and San Marcos. Again, depending on your point of view, the Turquoise Trail Scenic Byway either ends or starts at the point NM 14 crosses under Interstate 25 in Santa Fe.

1.6 ROAD SPECIFICATIONS

LENGTH: The South NM 337 and NM 333 segment of the Turquoise Trail is 1.1 miles or 1.8 kilometers in length, the NM 14 segment is 46.5 miles or 75 kilometers in length, and the NM 536 spur is 13.6 miles or 22 kilometers in length.

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION: The predominant functional classification of NM 14 is rural major collector. The functional classification of NM 536 is rural major collector although there's not much to collect except wildlife, since almost the entire road is located within the Cibola National Forest. Watch out for those deer!

ROAD SURFACE: The road surface is primarily high flexible mixed bituminous or bituminous, penetrating asphalt, or cement concrete pavement.

ROAD WIDTH: The typical lane width on NM 14 is 12 feet with two foot shoulders. The byway is two lanes from the southern terminus to I- 40 where it transitions to a four lane highway all the way to the intersection with NM 536. A portion of this byway segment has a center turn lane.

NM 536 has a typical lane width of 13 feet and is predominantly two lanes with two foot shoulders. As the road winds its way to the top of Sandia Crest, some segments have a climbing lane to allow slower vehicles to take a position in the right lane while faster traffic passes.

From the intersection of NM 536 to the northern terminus, NM 14's road lanes are 12 feet and most of the segment is two lanes wide. As NM 14 nears Interstate 25, it transitions to a four lane highway after the only light on the scenic byway, approximately two miles before the northern terminus is reached.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND STOP SIGNS: There are two stop sign intersections and one traffic light intersection on the byway at this time. A four way traffic sign stop is located in Tijeras at the intersection of NM 333 and NM 337. The second set of stop signs control traffic at the intersection of NM 14 and NM 536 in Sandia Park. The only stop light on the byway manages traffic at the intersection of NM 14 and Vista Del Monte Road (NM 599) in the San Marcos area. Since NM 14 is a traffic collector, there are also numerous stop signs on approach roads to NM 14: however, this does not impede the traffic on the byway.

BRIDGES AND UNDERPASSES. There are several drainage bridges on the Turquoise Trail and three larger bridges, one of which goes over a railroad track in Cerrillos. There are three underpasses. One double underpass is located at the intersection of NM 14 and Interstate 40 in Tijeras, another double underpass is located at the intersection of NM 14 and Interstate 25 in Santa Fe, and the final underpass is located below the eastbound exit ramp from Interstate 40.

RAILROAD TRACKS: The Turquoise Trail passes over one set of railroad tracks in Cerrillos. When viewing a locomotive as it approaches the bridge in Cerrillos, one can almost imagine the steam engines from a century ago carrying their heavy loads.