

# Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 1.0

## 18.0 Development Plan



**Road construction work for homesites at Paako**

### 18.1 EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

Development in the byway region has gradually deteriorated the scenic qualities of the area; however, it has enhanced the visitor experience and has not deteriorated any of the other five intrinsic qualities. In fact, some intrinsic qualities have improved due to development. When NM 14 changed to a four lane highway, it allowed more traffic to efficiently move. After NM 14 in the San Marcos area was straightened and widened, traffic could move faster, thus allowing better access to Cerrillos and Madrid. The faster roads have allowed some people in the region to use the road for commuting, which has a negative effect on visitors. However, these improved roads have made it easy for tour buses to access all the intrinsic qualities of the area. So far, the lack of water, schools, police and fire protection, sewers, economic growth, political pressure, and tax base have slowed, but not stopped development in the region.

At the writing of the first CMP six years ago, it was believed that development would not accelerate for five to ten years. That prediction proved true. From 2000 to 2006, overall development on the byway lagged behind development in the nation, New Mexico, and the surrounding cities of Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, and Santa Fe to the delight of most of the population living near the byway. That is expected to change dramatically over the next five to ten years. On the north end of the byway, light industrial buildings now dot the landscape. Traffic conditions required another traffic light. A major housing development has broken ground in the same area. A few years ago, the Town of Edgewood annexed an area along six miles of the byway. A 4000 home project to be built over the next thirty years may break ground within a year.

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### 18.1.1 Santa Fe County

The Santa Fe County Jail was completed in 1998 and is adjacent to the byway. Over the past five years the jail has expanded to include a county courthouse, sheriff department, and fire department. A nearby road now leads to an area zoned industrial, which will likely become an industrial park.

Homes continue to be built near the byway in the San Marcos area and a new project has started south of the City of Santa Fe. NM14 was straightened and widened in the San Marcos area over a decade ago causing many long time residents to say, "wider is not better." This is not a new concern, nor is it confined to our byway. According to the Alaskan Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan, they are also concerned, stating that "Highway construction projects decrease the aesthetic experience for the motorist by widening and straightening the road." Having said that, a straighter and wider road was constructed between Madrid and Cerrillos with years of community input. Ongoing highway construction will improve the road north of Cerrillos. It too will be straighter and wider. Once the project is completed, home construction in that area will accelerate.

Of the three counties the byway passes through, Santa Fe has the toughest restrictions for development. It controls the signs, the lights, building heights, and many other physical features that could adversely affect the byway. Santa Fe County is also considering increasing setbacks which would help the viewscape.

#### 18.1.1.1 San Marcos Community District Plan

Since 2003, area residents have been working on this plan for the area south of Santa Fe and north of Cerrillos. While not yet approved, several portions of the plan seek to protect the Turquoise Trail's viewscape, including the use of setbacks.

### 18.1.2 Sandoval County

Approximately five miles of NM 14 runs through Sandoval County, though the viewscape runs much further, primarily to the west. Previously the area was virtually undeveloped. New development at San Pedro Creek Estates and San Pedro Overlook is changing the landscape.

#### 18.1.2.1 The best scenario

The San Pedro Creek Estates development is nearly complete in terms of selling lots. Very few properties are left to be sold by the developer. The development is very upscale with lot sizes beginning at 10 acres. Although housing and other construction will detract from the scenic qualities of the byway, growth is bound to occur. Only building underground would have less of an impact on the viewscape. For many curious visitors, the expensive (by New Mexico standards) homes may have a positive effect. Conversely, many locals complain about homes built on ridge lines ruining the scenic quality of the area. There are currently no laws to prevent that.

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### 18.1.2.2 The worst scenario

Although there are no current plans for an industrial park near the byway, that could change. According to MRGCOG's (now known as MR COG) 1997-1998 Economic Development Plan (SPR-269 page 59), "Tourism is given high priority in Sandoval County, primarily due to the attractions of the Jemez and Sandia Mountains, and the historical and cultural resources in the County." Hopefully, Sandoval County will maintain that commitment and not develop the Sandia Mountain area adjacent to the byway. Nevertheless, there are plans to develop the flat area between the byway and I-25 fifteen miles away. In terms of viewscape this is not a great distance. If the development begins in the I-25 area in Sandoval County, it will take years to reach NM14, but it should be of great concern and should be planned for.

### 18.1.3 Bernalillo County

Bernalillo County development continues to be a wild card. The seat of government is in Albuquerque, a major city. Political decisions are controlled primarily by city people, because over 90% of the county's population live there. When a developer failed to get the county to approve a development plan in an unincorporated area, the company asked the Town of Edgewood to annex the area. Edgewood approved the annexation which now allows a 4000 home development to go forward when economic conditions allow it.

The Village of Tijeras also has local control and it's the most urban area on the south end of the byway, with Interstate 40 and three state highways running through it. While small in population, much of Tijeras is commercially zoned and it is more likely than not that more of the "village" will become commercialized. Wal-Mart thought Tijeras had enough commercial value to justify a superstore. This action was delayed by community protest and eventually Wal-Mart chose to no longer pursue the site. While the location Wal-Mart choose will not be developed as a store, the land was instead sold to the Albuquerque Public School District, which plans to build a 1600 student high school complex. When built, the high school could increase development and have more of an impact on the area than Wal-Mart would have.

A four hundred student charter high school was built a few years ago about seven miles north of Tijeras and an elementary school expanded in the same vicinity. Both cause traffic slowdowns due to school buses and increased student traffic. In general, both projects were welcomed by the local population.

#### 18.1.3.1 East Mountain Area Plan (EMAP)

On April 5, 2006 a revised EMAP was approved by the Bernalillo County Planning Commission after years of review. At the time of this writing the plan was set to go to the Bernalillo County Commission for final approval. The plan is a development guide for the area. The plan can be found on the county's website at [www.bernco.gov](http://www.bernco.gov)

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### 18.2 NEW AND PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT

#### 18.2.1 Mid-Region Council of Governments (MR COG)

For the past several years MR COG has been working on what is known as the Focus 2050. One project is FutureScape, which asks the public to decide how they want planned development to proceed into the distant future. There are currently four scenarios up for evaluation.

- Let things run the way they are now (suburban sprawl)
- Add development in the mesa areas (mostly in areas not on the byway)
- Prevent sprawl by clustering the communities
- Prevent sprawl and keep most of the population in Albuquerque and Rio Rancho.

Clearly, the first scenario is not a good one for the byway. How the others are accomplished could have a positive impact on the byway's intrinsic qualities; unfortunately, based on the last ten years, development has been random, driven by economic conditions, existing resources, the sale of ranch land to developers, the whim of developers, and not based on a local community plan.

#### 18.2.2 A few new and potential projects on the Turquoise Trail

- Nine miles of road widening and straightening between Madrid and San Marcos
- Two new bridges near Cerrillos
- New bridge in the San Marcos area
- Nine holes of golf added to the current 18 holes at Paa-Ko Ridge Golf course
- San Padro Overlook (over 100 homes to be built)
- Campbell Corporation PID (4000 homes to be built)
- Multi-use project in the Rancho Viejo Blvd area (homes, industrial/business park)
- Strip shopping center next to Cedar Crest Post Office
- Three building strip center at NM 14 mile marker 3 (two of three have been built)
- Proposed light rail commuter train stop at NM 599 and NM 14
- U.S. Forest Service office building at NM 599 and NM 14
- Proposed strip center near Turquoise Trail Fire station in San Marcos area
- Infrastructure at the Cerrillos Hills Historic Park
- Rebuild of the Madrid Ball Park and restrooms

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### 18.3 INFRASTRUCTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON GROWTH

The infrastructure that would contribute to significant fast growth to the area and more traffic on the byway does exist, but there are a few limitations:

- Water availability is limited
- Sewer and flood systems are not available
- Side roads are not paved
- Police protection is limited
- Fire protection is limited
- Living in a rural area is not the choice of most in the nation.
- Snow conditions and gravel roads scare people away
- Lack of typical suburban assets such as malls, movie theaters, and fast food
- Limited medical care facilities
- Long commutes to schools
- Cell phone and internet service is limited on parts of the byway
- Limited parking in Madrid

### 18.4 POLITICAL IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT

Except for Tijeras and Edgewood, the region is unincorporated; therefore, there is little in the way of local control. Political control of most development is located miles away in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Rio Rancho where most people live.

For the most part, the byway is positively affected by the lack of growth. Although some resources may be missing in some areas, such as public rest rooms and a centralized water system in Madrid, most of the byway has sufficient facilities to take care of both locals and visitors. The area has been attempting to plan managed growth for years, yet the best management tool has been the existing barriers, and not any plan.

### 18.5 ASSET PRESERVATION IN A DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

The scenic qualities of the area will continue to deteriorate as development continues; yet, many of the scenic qualities will remain, especially those of national significance. The view from the top of the Crest will deteriorate as smog from Albuquerque and the valley grows, but it's impact will be minimal for decades. The National Forest Wilderness area will be preserved, as will many other scenic qualities of the byway.

### 18.6 LAND MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Prevent development that will not protect the intrinsic qualities of the byway
- Use Development to enhance the intrinsic qualities of the byway
- Use Development to increase the quality of life of the people living on the byway
- Use Development to enhance the visitor experience

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### 18.7 LAND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- Determine which projects will enhance the visitor experience
- Determine what political structure would protect the intrinsic qualities
- Determine what private sector projects can positively effect the byway
- Find funding sources to protect and enhance the intrinsic qualities

### 18.8 LAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

- Research whether community incorporation would increase the quality of life
- Research whether community incorporation would better protect the byways intrinsic qualities
- Determine which intrinsic qualities can be protected
- Put laws in place to protect specific intrinsic qualities
- Support user fees in the National Forest and use those fees to maintain, protect, and improve the intrinsic qualities of the forest
- Support the increased conversion of ranchland to open space
- Support the use of setbacks to protect the viewscape