

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 2.0

10.0 Highway Design and Modification Plan



NM 14 at Los Lomas del la Bolsa heading to Madrid from Golden

10.1 EXISTING HIGHWAY DESIGN STANDARDS

In general, the segments of NM 14, NM 536, NM 333, and NM 337 that make up the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway are well maintained. Potholes and other road misalignments are not common. Road markings and signage appear to be well maintained; however, the existing highway signs (not to be confused with advertising signs) in the highway right of way do detract from the scenic beauty. Vegetation has been allowed to migrate onto some of the shoulders and also detracts from the scenic beauty, but more attention has been paid to that issue over the past five years and many stakeholders are encouraged by the plants in the newly constructed portions of the byway. Although the vegetation on the very narrow shoulders is unlikely to be a direct safety issue for motorized vehicles, the breakdown of the shoulders does impact bicyclists as they make room for passing vehicles.

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As NM 14 moves north of its intersection with NM 536, the road becomes hilly, curvy, and fun to drive. This continues through Golden and all the way to the southern tip of Madrid. In Madrid, moving motorized vehicles, cars parking, and pedestrians crossing the street anywhere along a half mile strip, present safety problems. Leaving the northern end of Madrid, the road is much improved with a context sensitive design.

Several miles north of Cerrillos the road becomes very straight and wide and the design encourages speeding. Much of the byway was designed for a travel speed of 60 MPH. The current legal speed limit for most of the byway is 55 MPH.

10.1.1 General road specifications

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION: The predominant functional classification of NM 14 and NM 536 is rural major collector.

ROAD SURFACE: The road surface is primarily high flexible mixed bituminous or bituminous, penetrating asphalt, or cement concrete pavement. The most recent construction uses “super pave” topped with a layer of Open Graded Friction Course (OGFG) that allows superior drainage.

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.

The newly completed road segment between Madrid and Cerrillos has a ten foot lane width with four foot shoulders. The segment under construction between Cerrillos to the Lone Butte area will have 11 foot lanes and four foot shoulders.

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 Madrid, 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 it intersects with NM 599 about two miles before it reaches the byway’s northern terminus.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND STOP SIGNS: There are four traffic light intersections and one stop sign intersection on the byway at this time. A traffic light is located in Tijeras at the intersection of NM 333 and NM 337. The second set of traffic lights are on the south side of the I-40 underpass in Tijeras. A set of stop signs control traffic approaching NM 14 from the NM 536 spur in Sandia Park. The third stop light on the byway manages traffic at the intersection of NM 14 and Vista Del Monte Road (NM 599) at the top of the trail. A fourth set of lights are located about a half mile south of I-25. 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. At least seven more traffic lights are being proposed at this time. One is in Cedar Crest near the Triangle Grocery store complex and may be

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installed within a year. The other six are between mile marker 6 and 10 in the Edgewood area, but will only get installed when the area gets developed and that is expected to be several years away.

BRIDGES AND UNDERPASSES. There are many small drainage bridges on the Turquoise Trail and three major bridges. All three bridges are new and in fine condition.

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.

10.2 PROJECTED MODIFICATIONS

The NMDOT has a computerized database of planned projects known as the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Stakeholders should contact the NMDOT to review future construction projects, before ground is broken on them to have the best chance of making community needs known.

10.3 ANALYSIS OF HIGHWAY MODIFICATION IMPACT ON INTRINSIC ASSETS

10.3.1 Major projects

One major project is ongoing a few miles north of Cerrillos to the San Marcos area. The project will improve the road and rebuild the bridges and will be completed in 2006.

A major project completed between Madrid and Cerrillos with years of community input has resulted in what most people consider a better road. Most of the negative implications such as a horrible looking straight road that encourages speeding, simply did not happen. Tourists will overwhelmingly prefer the new to the old.

But the public should not let their guard down as they did when the byway was straightened and widened without the use of contextual design criteria in the area near the prison complex. That design encourages speeding. Even though the posted speed limit in that portion of the byway is 55 MPH, it is quite common for traffic to exceed the limit. The new construction segments discourage speeding by design.

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10.3.2 The short and the long of it

In the short run, all the construction projects have a negative effect on tourism. The Madrid to Cerrillos project caused problems, but they were overcome and Madrid is more vibrant than ever. The current project north of Cerrillos is also causing disruptions, but it's mostly inconvenient for the local population during the week. That project too, will soon be completed and the expectation is that things will be better, until the population grows into it.

The rural nature of travel will be lost, as the area becomes more suburban, but it has not and will not happen overnight. More likely, it will take decades which gives all stakeholders a chance to mold the future as they wish. Most first time visitors to the area will probably not even notice the lights as they transition from Interstate 40 and 25, but the locals will and have. It is up to the local population to continue to be involved and vigilant in all highway construction projects and improvements.

10.3.3 What to do about it.

It is up to the area residents, area businesses, and the NMDOT to make the transitions as painless as possible; however, a major constraint is funding, whereby mitigating travel distress may not be possible to everyone's liking. Another unfortunate situation is that to minimize the short term inconvenience, it may be necessary to destroy some of the scenic beauty. One example would be to build a bridge in a different location, keeping the old one until the new one is complete, thus destroying a greater amount of vegetation.

The local population is not idly standing by; instead, they are trying to keep the scenic beauty. Local residents in the Madrid and Cerrillos area were so upset over the wider, bigger, faster road design put forth by the NMDOT that they asked the state to bring in outside consultants to see if an alternative could be found. The final results have been positive. The residents also made it known to their legislators that they want the area to stay scenic and rural. The legislators listened and on March 17, 1999, the New Mexico State House passed a Memorial, HM-50, sponsored by Representative Rhonda S. King in a 52-0 vote indicating that in their collective wisdom, tourism and the preservation of local scenic, natural, and cultural character are important to New Mexico and New Mexicans. The entire text of the memorial may be found on the next page.

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT RESPECT TRADITIONAL RURAL COMMUNITIES, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL SITES AND INVOLVE LOCAL COMMUNITIES DURING RECONSTRUCTION OF STATE HIGHWAY 14.

WHEREAS, state highway 14 is a scenic roadway between Santa Fe and Cedar Crest, attracting significant tourist dollars to communities along the route; and

WHEREAS, the highway corridor traverses several traditional communities designated by Santa Fe county; and

WHEREAS, there are many historic sites also along the route; and

WHEREAS, these scenic, historic, prehistoric and culturally valued communities and sites may be damaged by construction of improvements to state highway 14; and

WHEREAS, the United States department of transportation federal highway administration has developed flexibility in highway design that allows for the preservation of historic and scenic value while ensuring safe and efficient highways;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the state highway and transportation department be requested to involve the local communities, neighborhoods and businesses along state highway 14 in the development and adoption of the environmental assessment and final design of the reconstruction of state highway 14; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state highway and transportation department be requested to exercise care and sensitive planning in carrying out the reconstruction of state highway 14; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state highway and transportation department be requested to incorporate flexibility in highway design as set forth by the United States department of transportation federal highway administration in the final design of the reconstruction of state highway 14; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of highway and transportation, members of the Santa Fe board of county commissioners and state highway 14 citizen advisory committee.