

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan

Version 1.0

15.0 Economic Development Plan

15.1 EXISTING INDUSTRY

After the public sector, New Mexico's largest industries are the mining/extraction industry and tourism. Both private sector industries exist along the Turquoise Trail, so it's not at all surprising that the byway derived its name from an industry that existed centuries ago.

15.1.1 Mining

While mining is a necessary industry, it does not mix well with the residential and scenic qualities of the region. Mining can create visual blight even more devastating than that from a forest fire. While local residents successfully fought the construction of a Wal-Mart due to its size, an even larger mining plant looms nearby in Tijeras adjacent to the National Forest.

15.1.2 Tourism

The economic impact of tourism on the area is significant. A separate chapter called the Tourism Development Plan follows in the next chapter of the CMP. It will detail the existing situation and potential of tourism in the future. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the discussion of other economic development issues and their impact on the byway.

15.1.3 Prisons

Near the north end of the byway in the San Marcos/Santa Fe area, jails overwhelmingly provide the most jobs located on the byway with the New Mexico State Prison and the Santa Fe County Jail. While they may have a psychologically negative effect for some, their economic effect and the effect on the byway's intrinsic qualities is similar to adding housing stock and schools. In fact, there are fewer negative implications on the byway's intrinsic qualities. For example, 5,000 people in a jail have less of an impact than 5,000 people living in homes and driving to work or bussed to school each day. If built further from the byway, rather than closer, any growth in the prison industry will not negatively impact the byway. Except for the state's administration buildings, the main prison facilities do not significantly mar the viewscape because they have a low profile and are about 1/2 mile from the road. The administration buildings are two story office buildings. adjacent to the byway with a parking lot in front of them.

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15.1.4 Ranching

Ranching can be found along the byway; however, it is not economically significant. The livestock in the viewscape do have a positive effect on the scenic and natural intrinsic qualities, so that effect should not be discounted.

15.1.5 Farming

This is no significant farming on the byway; yet, there is “dry agriculture”, simply the natural range land that provides food for livestock. This form of farming has a beneficial impact to the byway’s viewscape, since visitors can see the land in its most natural, rugged form. From time-to-time in the warmer months, roadside vendors can be seen selling fruits and vegetables along the byway. For some visitors, especially those from urban areas, this can be a welcome treat, and it does provide an economic benefit to those from the surrounding districts where agriculture is more prevalent.

15.1.5 Construction

Construction is probably the most visible industry on the byway. While other industries are there year after year, construction is something new, something different, and something usually negative while it is occurring. Most construction along the byway is that of new homes located within the viewshed, although as discussed in this CMP, significant highway construction will occur beginning in 2000. In percentage terms, building of infrastructure has been great over the last two years, yet small in real terms. If one wanted to alarm the public about growth, here are some numbers:

- Gas stations increased by 25%
- Civic buildings increased by 100%
- Jails increased by 100%
- The square footage of retail shopping centers in Cedar Crest increased by 50%.

But that does not tell the story. One gas station, one community center, one jail, and one small strip shopping center were built in the last two years on fifty miles of roadway. Hardly, a building boom. In fact, the population growth in the area has slowed, the housing market is depressed, and public opposition to growth issues has steadily grown.

15.1.6 Exports

The byway does not have any major manufacturing facilities. While there may be some physical shipping of items such as hand made gift baskets, novelty items, and

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local arts and crafts, most physical items leave the area because someone visited and made a purchase. Any service industry that has the potential to export knowledge would be beneficial to the area, as well as, not have a negative effect on the byway and efforts should be made to increase those kinds of soft industries.

15.2 JOBS

The number of jobs available for people living in the byway area is not a problem, unless they do not wish to travel to the average levels of the rest of the nation. Having a choice to work in either Albuquerque or Santa Fe, the average drive to the outskirts of the closest city is approximately 20 minutes and less than 20 miles.

The entire byway is approximately 50 miles long, not counting the NM 536 spur to the top of Sandia Crest, with most residents living near one of the two major cities. In the southern byway region, residents mostly live in Tijeras, Cedar Crest, and Sandia Park. In the northern byway region, most residents live in the San Marcos area with Santa Fe zip codes. The residents in Cerrillos, Madrid, and Golden are the furthest away from the major cities and are also the least populated with a total population of less than 1000. They may be in the most need of local jobs; fortunately, based on the small population, the total number necessary to support them is also small.

While New Mexico is one of the poorest states in the nation based on per capita income and though New Mexico has many HUB Zones declared economically depressed by the Federal government, the byway is virtually free of that distress and byway businesses do not qualify for preferential treatment and assistance.

15.3 QUALITY OF LIFE

Since most area residents have jobs, they are more interested in their quality of life. If asked if they are for growth, most say they are not. If asked if they would like to increase their quality of life, the answer is most definitely yes. It's really a definition and perception problem. In fact, locals are mostly for growth if asked about specific issues. Most are for more hiking trails, a bike trail, rest rooms in Madrid, better school facilities, more sport facilities, more recreational, civic, and cultural facilities, and more parks. They want better water, police, fire, and medical protection. If financially able, they are perfectly willing to add a room or garage to their home. So, growth is what the other guy uses and what they use is just increasing their quality of life. It is a dilemma for planning purposes to understand these complex issues.

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15.3.1 Downsizing an industry

Except for those working in the mining or extraction industries, byway residents do not want these kinds of industry. They don't want the dust, the large trucks, and the blight to the viewscape. Since, quality of life issues are more important than jobs at this time, the local population will continue to fight against this industry. Currently, in the San Pedro area, Santa Fe County residents were able to successfully limit the number and times trucks could be on the byway, as well as, change their routing to have less impact on the region.

15.3.2 Upsizing an industry and a new way of life

Many local residents in the area work out of their homes. A quick look at the membership of the East Mountain Chamber of Commerce covering the area from Golden south to Tijeras on the byway shows that there are consultants, lawyers, CPAs, computer specialists, and building contractors all working from their homes. As the nation moves from manufacturing based jobs to service jobs, more and more people can effectively work from home. In fact, a local specialty closet designer and manufacturer does a significant business building home offices.

As intellectual property replaces physical heavy lifting, job growth becomes less of an issue. The home based industry is virtually invisible to the community, with the U.P.S. delivery truck being the only outward sign that impacts a neighborhood. As the internet becomes more pervasive, more relevant, and more effective, cottage industries will continue to grow. Clearly, this type of growth is good for the byway, as it does not impact the intrinsic qualities of the area.

15.4 LIMITATIONS

There are two major limitations to economic development, if overall growth is the goal; which apparently, it is not for the area's population. The first is water and the second is human resources

15.4.1 Water

There are two water issues in the area. Obtaining water rights in the first place and then if obtained, preserving the water quality.

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Three years ago, a golf course was to be built at Paa-Ko. Many area residents did not want it and fought to block the project. The project start was delayed for two years until the courts finally allowed it to proceed. Water was used as an issue. The golf course will be operational in spring, 2000.

Two years ago, Wal-Mart tried to build a major supercenter in Tijeras. After two years of delay, Wal-Mart decided not to build in 1999. Water was again an issue. It must be noted that at the same time Wal-Mart decided not to build, it purchased, subject to regulatory approval, a foreign retailer for more than \$10 billion. It's likely the project was marginal and that the local opposition was enough to stop it.

15.4.2 Air quality

The air quality on the byway is generally excellent; however, as traffic in the area increases, it may be in danger. The area suffers from air inversions in winter, and smoke from wood-burning stoves is trapped. Although, not a safety issue at this time, it is something that will have to be studied as more people move into the area.

15.4.3 Sound quality

The area is quiet compared urban areas. The road noise can be heard at night, but due to very low truck traffic and low night traffic in general, highway sounds are not a problem. The area is so quiet, that many visitors may not be able to sleep at night as they hear every hoot or holler from a mile away. If traffic starts to become a problem, the residents will respond. Currently, homeowners are constantly complaining about dog barking. If that bothers the local folk, just think of what they will do if trucks start speeding on their byway at 10 PM.

15.4.4 Light pollution

As the area grows, so does the housing stock and both businesses and residents have installed lights. Residents are primarily concerned about safety and businesses are concerned about business. People that have moved to the area to enjoy a peaceful way of life are not amused. Watching shooting stars from a hot tub at midnight is becoming more and more difficult. Although the reflective light of Albuquerque on an overcast evening would be difficult to restrain, technologies are available to force light to be directed downward. A starting point would be to educate the public; an ending point would be to create and enforce zoning restrictions.

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15.4.5 Trash

While trash is not a major problem on the byway, there is always room for improvement. In terms of economic development, the cleaner things are, the more likely the roadside will be respected.

15.4.6 Human resources

Given that the unemployment rate in the area is low, local residents do not want an economic benefit, if it will result in other negative quality of life effects; hence, quality of life issues will drive economic development. People will build homes, add on to homes, shop at retailers if they are the right kind, eat at restaurants, enjoy entertainment, and use every bit of recreational resource available to them. In fact, they hunger for more cultural and recreational activities. These are all good indicators for the byway because most of what the local population wants preserves and expands the byway's intrinsic qualities.

15.4.7 Capital improvements

The byway area is in need of capital improvements to allow economic growth. Some of these are discussed in the Development Plan, while others are discussed in the Tourism Development Plan.

15.5 OUTSIDE FACTORS

The economic growth of the byway area is largely dependent on the nearby cities of Albuquerque and Santa Fe. If their economies are doing well, the byway economy grows. If the cities suffer, so does the population on the byway. This is primarily a jobs issue outside the area. As stated before, most people on the byway do not work on the byway, but in the city. Most visitors to the byway are from the cities. Careful attention must be paid to economic growth issues in the cities.

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15.5.1 Albuquerque

The City of Albuquerque has sufficient resources to sustain economic growth and it has a vast array of assets including:

- University of New Mexico
- Federally funded National Laboratories
- Kirkland Air Force Base
- Albuquerque International Sunport (airport)
- Interstate 40 and Interstate 25

Some issues that require attention to sustain economic growth:

- Regional water plan
- Regional transit authority
- Crime prevention
- Improved education
- Exports

The prime impediment to economic growth is that the region does not export high value products to a great extent. Since New Mexico is one of the poorest states, the local population cannot expand their economic base unless the citizens have the discretionary income to do so; they don't. When compared to states like California or Connecticut, the area lags greatly. The region is very dependent on low paying public sector jobs, such as entry level military personnel at Kirkland Air Force base. Low median incomes result in a low tax take and public service jobs also suffer. One example would be teachers. While teachers in Connecticut can earn more than \$70,000 per year, and have starting salaries well over \$30,000, many in New Mexico earn less than Connecticut's starting pay, even after years of service. All of this translates to a lower standard of living in the area.

15.5.2 Santa Fe

Economically, Santa Fe is much better off than Albuquerque. It is a cultural center with many full and part time residents bringing in their wealth from out of state sources. The seat of state government is in Santa Fe and brings with it the highest paying of state public sector jobs. Los Alamos, with a great concentration of educated people and high incomes, gives Santa Fe added economic power.

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15.5.3 Turquoise Trail Scenic Byway as an asset

The Turquoise Trail can help both cities, since it contains quality of life resources that are highly valued, both nationally and internationally. Most of these values are tourism related and are discussed in the Tourism Plan. The point being that Albuquerque and to a lesser extent, Santa Fe can both use the byway and its intrinsic qualities to offset some of the current barriers to economic growth, namely the lack of educated and financially well off individuals to “prime the pump.”

15.6 MIDDLE RIO GRANDE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT (MRGCOG)

MRGCOG created an economic development plan in 1997-1998. Their jurisdiction covers State Planning Development in District 3 which includes Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties, two of the three counties that the byway runs through. Santa Fe is in District 5 which does not currently have the resources to do major studies and produce research reports. MRGCOG's research has stated that the main constraints to economic development are water rights and human resources, both of which have been discussed in the preceding paragraphs. They mention that the region is trying to improve education and provide higher paying jobs. Since New Mexico still lags behind the nation in both areas, those efforts are currently inadequate to obtain the desired results. Attention and improvement to these areas will likely improve many of the intrinsic qualities of the Turquoise Trail.

15.7 NORTHERN PUEBLOS REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (NPRPO)

The northern portion of the byway that is located in Santa Fe County is part of the NPRPO jurisdiction. Their role in economic development thus far has been minimal. As their planning process matures, we expect the NPRPO to have more input into the direction of growth on the byway.

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15.8 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Do not harm the intrinsic qualities of the byway
- Assist the cities in their educational goals
- Create better jobs, not more jobs
- Defray the cost of building infrastructure that benefits the local population
- Use the byway's intrinsic qualities to help the region economically
- Obtain financial resources outside of the area

17. 9 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

- Focus on the city residents because there are so many of them
- Increase the standard of living for local and city residents
- Increase the education levels of the local and city residents
- Convert the mine in Tijeras to forest land
- Close down mining/extraction industry near the byway
- Leverage the local resources to create high end jobs
- Export products from soft cottage industries
- Develop for export, tourism and intellectual property related products

15.10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

- Study the demographics of the population in Cerrillos, Madrid, and Golden and determine how the byway's intrinsic qualities can be used to help the local population with local jobs
- Use cultural resources like the Mountain Arts Council to educate the city population
- Use the natural resources managed by the U. S. Forest Service to educate the city population.
- Use the archeological resources such as the Museum of Archeology and Material Resources to educate the public
- Develop historical and cultural sites such as the CCC
- Develop non-profit museums to attract outside funding
- Develop non-profit organizations that will preserve and protect specific intrinsic qualities and use those organizations to attract outside funding.
- Leverage the organic expertise derived from educating the city population to locally educate a financially well-off national and international population.
- Use the financial resources of the national and international visitors to improve the quality of life for the local population
- Use the financial resources of the national and international visitors to preserve and improve the byway's intrinsic qualities