

Turquoise Trail Corridor Management Plan Version 2.0

17.0 Visitor Experience Improvements

Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism. User facilities must be accessible, convenient and well-maintained. The congestion of visitors and traffic at key points along the byway during peak travel season, if not properly managed, will diminish the region's appeal as a recreational and tourism destination. Since the original CMP was written five years ago, increases in tourism population to the area has been minimal and there has been no known negative impact in that time period due to tourists. While visitor management goals are still valid, they are dwarfed by the continued development of the area into bedroom communities for both Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

Effective visitor management can:

- Avoid conflicts among visitor types competing for the same views and experiences
- Allow resource managers to target specific visitor types
- Allow resource managers to redirect visitors to locations that are better able to handle increased visitation
- Allow residents to continue to enjoy their own backyards
- Ensure that visitors recreate in areas best suited to their abilities, thus reducing emergency situations
- Encourage visitation growth in the shoulder and off-season to support businesses dependent on a tourism economy and
- Manage traffic speeds in areas of intensive visitor use, such as in Madrid on the weekends, and typical rush hours for commuters.

Safety, beauty and efficiency need not be mutually exclusive. The beauty of the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway should assist and guide management decisions regarding the road and viewshed. Safety improvements should be undertaken not only with an understanding of reduced accident statistics, but also with an understanding of any impacts such improvements may have on the aesthetic quality of the corridor. This is not to suggest that safety take a "back seat" to scenic views, but rather suggests that the Turquoise Trail warrants additional consideration due to its outstanding scenic qualities. This plan simply seeks the acknowledgement of these additional considerations during the planning phase of future projects. If, for example, lighting is needed at an

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intersection for increased safety, this plan encourages additional questions: “What type of lighting will provide the desired safety effect and have the least visual intrusion on the natural landscape? Are there other alternatives to lighting? Are there local and county lighting plans and codes?”

17.1 VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

A. Ensure a TTSB visitor’s actual visitation experience meets and exceeds their expectations.

17.2 VISITOR EXPERIENCE OBJECTIVES

A. Hospitality - Provide high quality customer service at all visitor contact points on the TTSB.

B. Infrastructure - Provide the necessary infrastructure along the TTSB to accommodate visitors. Define, in each community, what is required. It is important that visitors feel comfortable and safe.

C. Evaluation - Develop a quantifiable method of reviewing whether visitors' experiences meet or exceed their expectations.

17.3 VISITOR EXPERIENCE STRATEGIES

A1. Inventory all visitor contact points on the TTSB and develop a database. (This activity completed with tourism asset inventory.)

A2. Invite front-line tourism employees and business owners to participate in free hospitality training workshops.

A3. Invite deputies from county sheriffs departments.

A4. Implement workshops focusing on customer service, cultural awareness, the importance of tourism to the economy, and “What’s there to do around here?”

B1. With input from the SBAC and other stakeholders, develop optimum plans for restrooms, parking, trash facilities, roadway improvements, signage and maintenance.

B2. Provide this plan to the proper government authorities and request support and commitment to implementation.

B3. Develop a fund raising plan to assist in project implementation.

B4. Restrooms in Cerrillos and Madrid

B5. Road side rest stops and viewing areas

B6. Integrated information centers in each community

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17.4. Progress

A great deal of progress has been made on some of our strategies in the original CMP. With byway funding, we completed the following.

- C1. Develop a visitor experience questionnaire.
- C2. Train local visitor contact people in the administration of the questionnaire.
- C3. Develop an incentive for completing the questionnaire.
- C4. Award contact people who have the most questionnaires completed.
- C5. Determine a period of time for questionnaires to be completed.
- C6. Analyze questionnaire responses and report to the TTA any changes that should be implemented based on results.

Regarding 17.3 B6, Tijeras now has a visitor center, but at the time of this writing it is seldom open to help tourists. We accomplished much of 17.2 B. in a feasibility study performed with byway grant funding. For 17.3 B5, two overlooks have been built and more are in the planning stage.

Regarding 17.3 B4, Santa Fe County Commissioner Mike Anaya visited a community meeting in Madrid held to discuss portable toilets availability for tourists. Commissioner Anaya was subsequently able to find funding for two portable toilets in Madrid and one in Cerrillos. Moreover, Santa Fe County funds weekly cleaning of the toilets.

Also regarding 17.3 B4, in March 2006 Madrid Cultural Projects received a \$84,100 National Scenic Byway grant to install restrooms and interpretive material at the Oscar Huber Memorial Ballpark in Madrid.