

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 Marco 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. There is no reason to predict that this will change over the next five to ten years.

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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. Homes continue to be built near the byway in the San Marcos area. NM14 was straightened and widened in that area 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."

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.

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. The area is virtually undeveloped and development will reduce the quality of the viewscape.

18.1.2.1 The best scenario

The San Pedro Creek Estates development is in full swing. The development is very upscale with lot prices upward of \$70,000 and lot sizes beginning at 10 acres. Although the housing or any 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.

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 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, it will take years to reach NM14, but it should be of great concern and should be planned for.

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18.1.3 Bernalillo County

Bernalillo County development is a wild card. The seat of government is in Albuquerque, a major city. All the political decisions are controlled primarily by city people, because over 90% of the county's population live there. The Village of Tijeras is the only portion of the county to have local control and it's also the most urban, with Interstate 40, and three state highways running through it. Much of the area 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. However, the fact that the number one retailer in the world saw Tijeras as a good place to do business on a "grand scale" does give one pause.

18.2 NEW AND PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT

18.2.1 Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments (MRGCOC)

For the past several years MRGCOC 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 five years, development has been random, driven by economic conditions, existing resources, the whim of developers, and not based on a local community plan.

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18.2.2 A few new and potential projects on the Turquoise Trail

- Signal lights in Tijeras
- Nine miles of road widening and straightening between Madrid and San Marcos
- New bridge near Cerrillos
- Over 800 new homes in Paa-Ko
- 18 hole golf course at Paa-Ko
- Secondary education (a 400 student Charter high school) will be available in the area
- Two to three percent new housing construction annually
- Strip shopping center at the intersection of NM 14 and NM 536
- Enhanced viewing areas and ADA improvements to Sandia Crest
- Enhanced interpretive signs in the National Forest
- Tijeras Ranger Station expansion and interpretive museum
- Expansion of the Museum of Archeology and Material Culture
- Visitor center in Tijeras

18.3 INFRASTRUCTURE AND IT'S IMPACT ON GROWTH

The infrastructure that would contribute to significant fast growth to the area and more traffic on the byway does not exist. Some of the limitations follow:

- New phone service in Madrid is difficult to obtain
- Maximum internet speeds on phone lines less than half of that found in cities
- Water availability is limited
- Sewer and flood systems are not available
- Side roads are not paved
- Police 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

18.4 POLITICAL IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT

Except for Tijeras, 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.

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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 its 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

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