



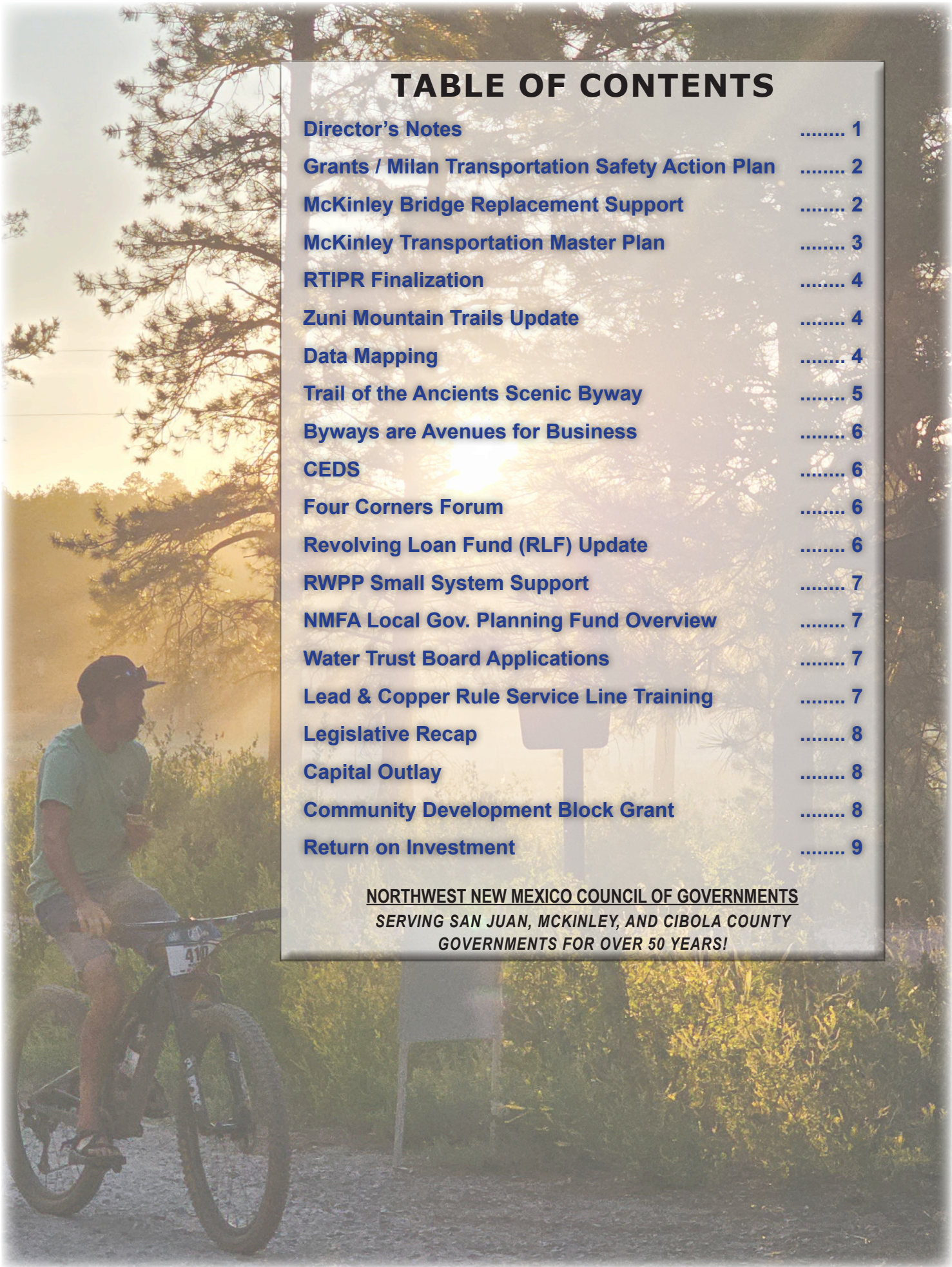
January - March 2024

CONNECTING THE DOTS

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NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
SERVING SAN JUAN, MCKINLEY, AND CIBOLA COUNTY
GOVERNMENTS FOR OVER 50 YEARS!



Sometimes you have to tell it like it is

Months back, I found myself on an hour-long interview with USA Today reporter Austin Fast, who wanted to dig into reasons why northwest New Mexico has not seen the investments from Federal programs that seem to be targeted, aimed, and written for us in terms of socio-economic statistics, data, equity, economic transition, disadvantaged communities, etc. After it was over I went back to figuring out how to win investments from the various BIL/IRA programs including Safe Streets and Roads for All. We had intentionally received State money to do the transportation safety action plans needed to prove out hotspot data and countermeasures to position our communities for project funding.

We have developed some strategic programs and partnerships including our support of the State's matching fund program and this year's commitment

What blocks small places like Gallup from winning grants? USA TODAY

Competing for grants takes resources small towns often just don't have, said Evan Williams. He leads the six-member staff of the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, which helps McKinley County and two neighboring counties coordinate on transportation, economic development and environmental issues.

Williams' staff points out grant opportunities to the tiny tribal communities around Gallup and helps review applications, but most of these places can't keep grant writers on staff. It's often the village clerk or manager who might squeeze a grant application between typing up local meeting notices or driving the school bus, Williams said, leaving them little time to decipher complex federal guidelines.



Several pedestrians have been killed while dashing this section of Interstate 40, which separates downtown Gallup, NM, from stores and restaurants. *Austin Fast, USA TODAY*

Director's Notes Evan Williams



of \$75M to give our communities a chance at getting in the game. We have developed partnerships with our members to get a stable of grantwriters and technical experts on our team. And we have linked up with BNSF Railway on win-win, public-private projects to take our team to the next level.

- There's no doubt we are playing Moneyball and we intend to win. - Time to take my own advice and stop complaining about it and be about it.

And then there's all the accounting paperwork to be done after winning a grant. That's why Williams said they gravitate toward state dollars, which often require a smaller local investment and less-stringent reporting requirements.

“ *If you barely have time to write the grant, you're never going to have time to manage the grant. They could use all the grants in the world, but they don't really have the capacity to manage them.* **”**

EVAN WILLIAMS, NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

“If you barely have time to write the grant, you're never going to have time to manage the grant,” Williams said. “They could use all the grants in the world, but they don't really have the capacity to manage them.”

The small city of Farmington, New Mexico, one county north of Gallup, is the only place in the state outside the capital of Albuquerque that's applied for an implementation grant. It also struggles with above-average rates of alcohol-involved crashes and poverty, so traffic engineer Mark Hathcock tackled his first grant ever – by himself.

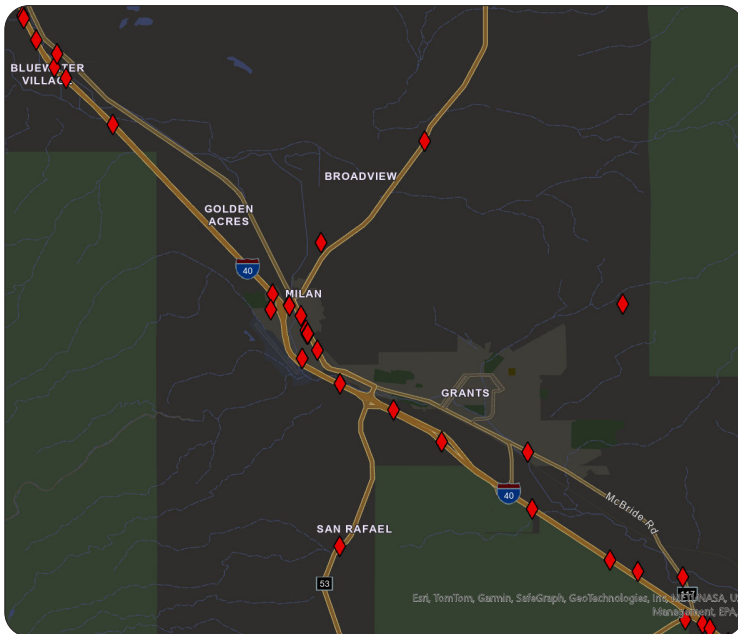
Hathcock requested \$2.4 million to upgrade Farmington's busy downtown intersections, but he said it was rejected because he didn't supply enough data to justify the project.

Grants / Milan Transportation Safety Action Plan

The Grants/Milan Transportation Safety Action Plan was awarded State Planning and Research Funds at \$150,000 for \$120,000 in SPR funds with a \$30,000 local match. This project will seek to identify high incidence accident areas, and plan mitigation strategies using contributing data to reduce accidents, injuries and fatalities through design and infrastructure adjustments. This may include traffic and pedestrian warning and guiding infrastructure, increasing public awareness, improving the interface of pedestrian, bicycle, traffic, and railroad infrastructure, considering speed and sight distance for high incidence areas, and consideration toward reconstructing high incidence intersections. This will also include consideration toward multimodal interface areas to create adequate warning, separation, sight-distance, and multi-modal interventions.

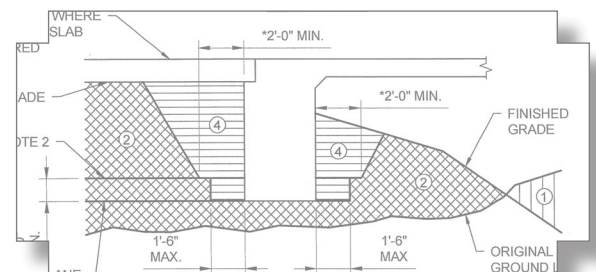
Wilson & Co. Engineering Firm has been assigned to lead this project and has held their first Stakeholder meeting on November 29, 2023. At this meeting they identified areas needing infrastructure improvements to increase multi-modal and pedestrian safety.

They held their first Public Meeting on March 7, 2024, with goals to reduce injuries and deaths; and promote multimodal mobility and safety. Provided the forthcoming process including crash data analysis, safety counter measures, implementation plan, final safety action plan, and adapt these plans by June 2024. Public discussion highlighted lack of sidewalks, outdated transportation system, concern for bikes and pedestrians, discussion on where multimodal danger areas are, and the public placing stickers on Grants/Milan maps for danger areas.



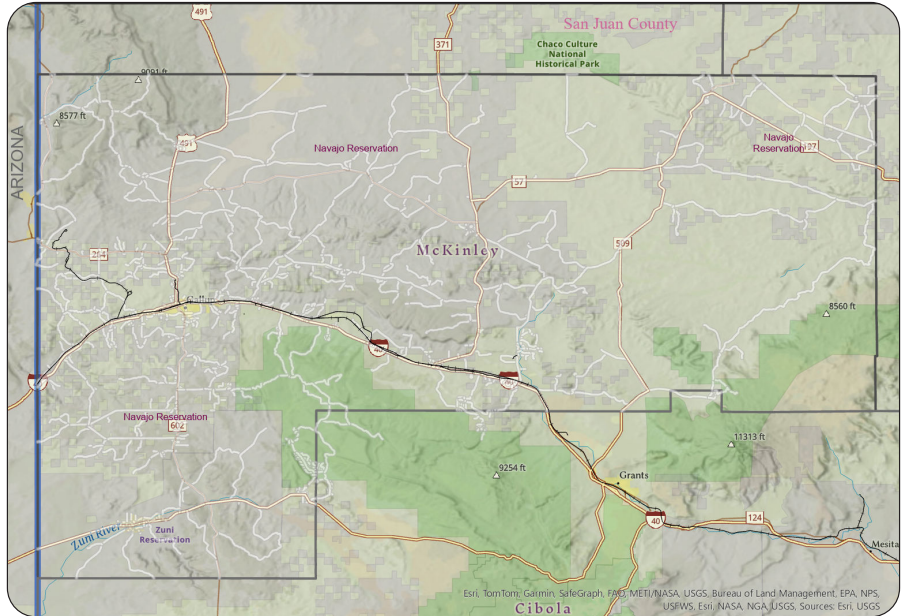
McKinley Bridge Replacement Support

COG staff received and filed Bridge Repair / Replace resolutions from our regional Navajo Chapters within New Mexico, that will help Navajo DOT become more competitive for forthcoming state and federal bridge funding. This includes a list of 35 bridges on behalf of the following Chapters: Baca, Bread Springs, Church Rock, Manuelito, Mexican Springs, Pine Dale, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Chichiltah, Iyanbito, Twin Lakes and Whitehorse Lake.



McKinley Transportation Master Plan

The McKinley Transportation Master Plan was awarded State Planning and Research Funds at \$250,000 for \$200,000 in SPR funds with a \$50,000 local match. This project will establish goals and priorities for improving multimodal transportation infrastructure within McKinley County, provide community engagement for the planning process, examine existing conditions for the transportation network, consider and mitigate safety issues, prioritize future projects, engage additional funding sources, and establish recommendations for future transportation projects. This effort will include a project website and interactive map for stakeholder and public contributions.



Bohannon Huston Engineering Firm has been assigned to lead this project and held their first Stakeholder meeting on December 11, 2023. This meeting addressed benefits of a TMP, role of stakeholders, vision and goals exercise, existing conditions overview, interactive map, and meeting wrap up.

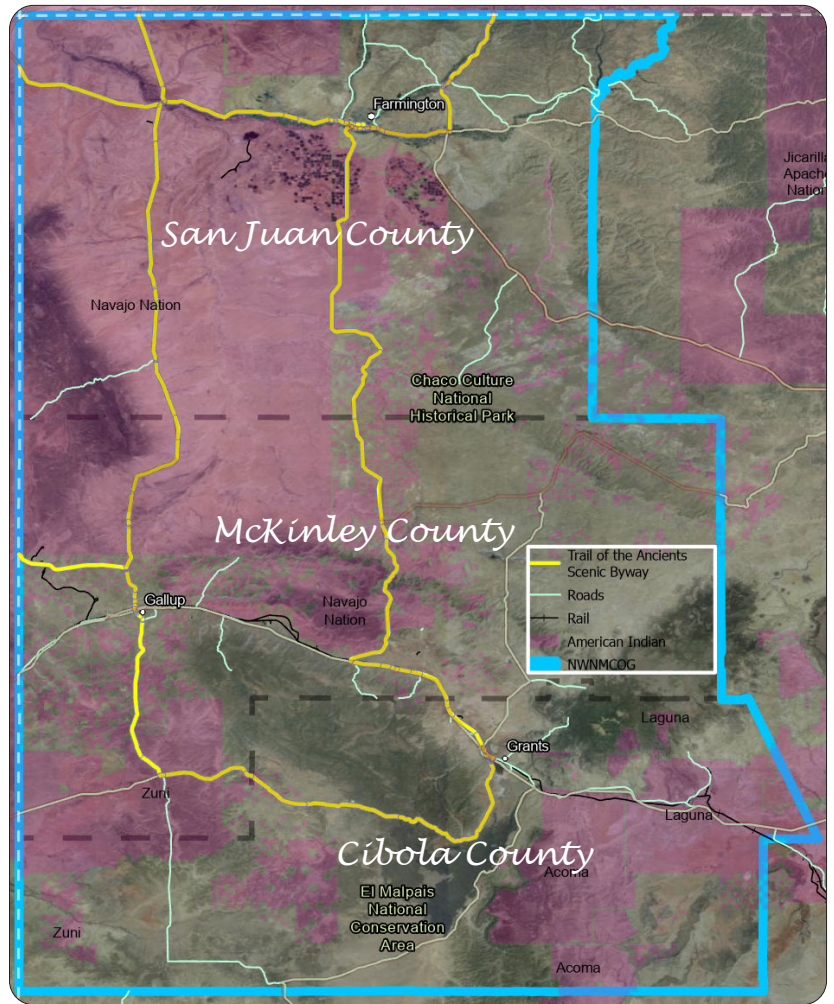
BHI held their first Project Team meeting on December 14, 2023. This meeting included discussion on who to engage – including community and county leaders, Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Zuni, and the BIA. It will have significant value to engage the various jurisdictions within the McKinley County region to provide data for the cross-jurisdictional transportation network. The value of a project website was discussed along with an interactive map. BHI indicated it would be helpful to gain roadway jurisdictions – whether Navajo, BIA, county, and federal (parks, forest, monuments) – maps could show these jurisdictions.

BHI held a project check in meeting with County staff on January 11, 2024. This meeting provided progress updates, and information requests including county road data, Zuni Mountain Trail maps, and shapefiles. Working with Wilson Co. to seek data from Navajo and BIA – possibly with support from Ron Shutiva. Bob K. offered to reach out to others including Rodney Skersick – McKinley Road Dept., Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Zuni for more details on what would be helpful to them. While the plan focuses on County roads it would be helpful to gain support from our various tribal and federal jurisdictions thru which many of these road traverse. Next steps include analyzing data, public engagement and stakeholder meetings, consideration around the BNSF Rail Lines, and our regional industrial parks for rail and trucking access.



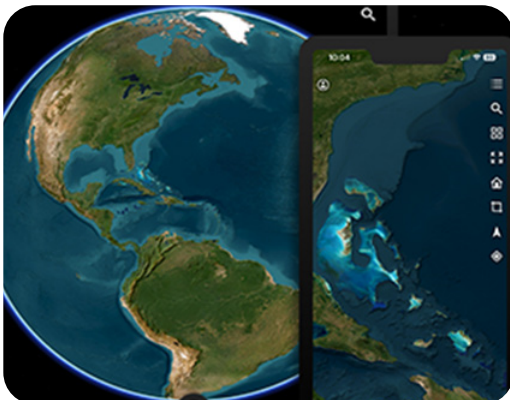
RTIPR Finalization

The RTIPR was finalized for projects from all our NWRTPO member governments, along with one project for Catron County – MRRTPO, and two projects for Sandoval County – SWRTPO, as these counties are part of NMDOT District 6. The final total for the RTIPR stands at \$402,711,459 including \$78,022,045 for prioritized Roadway projects and \$64,771,632 for unprioritized Roadway projects (total - \$142,793,677); \$145,579,005 for Bridge projects, \$5,800,000 for Planning projects, \$9,800,000 for Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) projects, \$15,150,000 for Recreational Trails (RTP) projects, \$2,000,000 for Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) projects, \$30,808,857 for prioritized Transportation Project Fund (TPF) projects, and \$46,660,185 for unprioritized TPR projects (total - \$77,469,042), and \$4,119,735 for Public Transit projects. These projects were approved and authorized for the final FFY2024 RTIPR at our March 13, 2024, virtual meeting. These projects seeking funding, are on behalf of our New Mexico member governments participating in the NWRTPO, including Cibola County, McKinley County, San Juan County, City of Gallup, City of Grants, Village of Milan, Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ramah Navajo.



Zuni Mountain Trails Update

Winter and spring weather halted trail construction, while some reroutes gained US Forest Service approval for the McKenzie Ridge Trail Connector, part of Twin Springs trail system. The McKenzie Ridge Trail is expecting completion by the end of this year and open to recreation enthusiasts. The US Forest Service is working on updating Task Orders for McKinley County, as well as creating scopes of work for the Youth Conservation Corp and volunteer organizations. The Quartz Hill Trail System in Cibola County has been delayed with trail construction but hopefully it will continue soon.



Data Mapping

The COG mapping data generated for the Federal Highways' scenic byway application from several years ago that has gained National recognition has been shared with the engineering firm Bohannon Huston Inc., who are working on the Trails of the Ancients Corridor Master Plan. Maps in this CTD newsletter illustrate how data is used. Stored mapping data collected years ago, are currently being updated. The US Census prior 2020 allowed geography boundaries to be updated with Blocks and Tracts, as well as for incorporated cities and Census Designated Places. The incorporated cities and Census Designated Places geography boundaries, Participant Statistical Area Program, can now be updated on a yearly basis, based on their criteria and guidelines. To update geographies for the US Census Bureau is a software called Geographic Update Partnership Software (GUPS) and QGIS. Data mapping collection and availability for its use is an ongoing effort for use and spatial analysis.

Trail of the Ancients

Federal designation in 2021 triggered the COG to act swiftly to secure funding from the New Mexico Department of Transportation to update the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. In 2023, the COG executed an agreement with NMDOT to fund the CMP and has officially kicked-off the project in quarter 3 with the intention to complete the plan by June 30, 2024.

The Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway is a corridor that runs approximately 600 miles through San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola Counties, including through the Tribal Nations of the Navajo Nation and Pueblo of Zuni. The byway is made up of archeological, natural, cultural, recreational, scenic, and historic attractions.

The Corridor Management Plan is a guide that outlines how communities will use, enhance, project and benefits from the intrinsic qualities and character for their byway corridor. The plan will include existing conditions analysis including the identification of tourism assets, acknowledgement of challenges development of goals, identification of strategies and opportunities and implementation of projects to enhance the overall tourism experience provided by the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway.



Scenic Byway

In addition to updating the Corridor Management Plan, COG, through consultants will produce marketing and business plans and will conduct an economic impact analysis for the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway. Upon completion of the plan, the COG will continue to support the byway by helping to reassemble the Byway Association which will be comprised of representatives from the region. The Byway Association will be responsible for implementing the CMP and will support the byway to attract tourists and build upon existing assets.

We need your voice at the table and ideas on the map. For more information regarding the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway, please visit: <https://engage.bhinc.com/TOTA>



COME TALK WITH US ABOUT THE TRAIL OF THE ANCIENTS SCENIC BYWAY

The Trail of the Ancients is a Scenic Byway corridor that runs almost 600 miles through San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola counties, and Navajo Nation and Pueblo of Zuni in Northwest New Mexico. It is made up of archeological, natural, cultural, recreational, scenic, and historic attractions.

The Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan is getting updated, which will guide how communities will use, enhance, protect, and benefit from the attractions and views along this corridor. We need your local knowledge to help update this plan.

- ◊ What are your favorite attractions on the Trail of the Ancients?
- ◊ Do attractions have proper amenities (parking, bathrooms, etc.)?

Connect with us in person at these locations

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

10am - 2pm
Wings n Wheels
 Grants-Milan Airport
 1116 N. Dale Carnutte Rd

7pm - 9pm
Gallup Arts Crawl
 Coal Ave & Second Street

SUNDAY, APRIL 14

1pm - 3pm
 Animas Valley Mall
 4601 E Main Street
 Farmington

Bohannon & Huston



LEARN MORE AT:
ENGAGE.BHINC.COM/TOTA
CONTACT US: TRAILOFANCIENTS@BHINC.COM

Map of Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway

Para información en español contacta a trailoftheancients@bhinc.com



Byways are Avenues for Business

The COG is actively working hard on our two National Scenic Byways. Evan Williams, Executive Director was appointed by the Governor to represent our region on the New Mexico Centennial Commission and has participated in several planning meetings including a facilitated workshop in Tucumcari on February 29, 2024. In addition, the COG continues to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Trail of the Ancients Byway.



CEDS

COG Executive Director has been in the weeds on developing a new framework for our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan that is due for a five-year update. The COG has landed some additional Economic Development Administration support that will be contracted and targeted to our local economic development organizations to add capacity. In return, the COG will empower these local connectors to drive public engagement and planning integration from the local level into the regional CEDS.



Four Corners Forum

The COG is actively working with its partners on a Federal Funder's Summit aimed at bringing the Washington DC brass and funding gatekeepers to the region to find out about projects and needed investment in the region. We are targeting this Summer, so stay tuned.

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Update

The COG is at the goal line in closing its first loan for almost \$150,000. The program was granted a two-year extension to continue to serve established businesses looking to expand. Over 200 business visits were conducted to market the program directly to potential customers over the last several years. The COG is working on two deals that should be reviewed by the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Committee in early January.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND

→

EDA awards a grant to an organization that manages the RLF

500

EDA-funded RLFs support economic development nationwide

An RLF provides a flexible source of capital for businesses. When the loan is repaid, the fund revolves to support more businesses.

\$560

EDA has invested over \$560 million to capitalize RLFs

Across the US, over 39,000 loans have been made

More than **690,000 jobs** have been created or retained

MORE INFO

<https://www.eda.gov/rlf/>

RLF loans have leveraged **over \$17 billion** in additional investment

RLF loans have leveraged **over \$17 billion** in additional investment

Small System Support

COG's Regional Water Planning Organization (RWPO) office worked closely with standing partners, with the New Mexico Environment Department, the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) and the Southwest Environmental Finance Center (SWEFC), in providing much needed technical assistance to small water systems throughout the region. Community outreach is currently being extended to include other special districts in Cibola County and San Juan County. The COG/RWPO was invited to present to the San Juan Water Commission to review levels of technical support available for small systems.

In this quarter, the RWPO secured legislative funding through the water regionalization bill for small water systems support that was passed in 2023. The COG is working with NMED to develop an action plan to assist the Northwest New Mexico Utility Authority with organizational needs.

Funding Overview

The Gamarco Water & Sanitation District did not qualify for the NMFA Local Government Planning Fund (LGPF) due to its financial status. COG/RWPO instead assisted the district with capital outlay requests to help fund a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for its New Water Well project. All other pre-planning activities are secured, including land acquisition and studies. The Yahtahey Water & Sanitation District secured capital outlay funding last year for wastewater priorities that was partially expended to purchase pumps and upgrade lift stations. The remaining balance will be used to develop a Wastewater PER that is focused on improving the entire wastewater system and equipment, including lagoon remediation.

Water Trust Board Applications

The COG/RWPO assisted McKinley County, the City of Gallup and Ramah Water & Sanitation District with the submission of Water Trust Board (WTB) applications. These applications are currently under review. The loan/grant/match percentages for each project will be determined at a later date.

McKinley County requested funding to replace an existing crossing and drainage along Superman Canyon Road (County Road 43).

The City of Gallup requested funding to replace existing (and aging) cast iron, cement asbestos and iron ductile pipelines at eight separate locations throughout the city.

The Ramah Water & Sanitation District requested funding to complete project design for its water infrastructure improvement project.

Lead & Copper Rule Service Line Inventory Training

The COG/RWPO and its standing partners with NMED, RCAC and SWEFC organized and facilitated two separate workshop trainings for small systems in Cibola and San Juan Counties. Under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Lead and Copper Rule Revisions program (LCRR), there is a new regulation that requires all public water systems to complete a Lead Service Line Inventory by October 16, 2024. COG/RWPO and its standing partners are working hard to reach every rural water system to train and assist with these inventories. For more information on these trainings or other priorities, please contact Angelina Grey at (505) 722-4327.



Legislative Recap

As part of our annual agreement with the State of New Mexico, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments provides a vast array of legislative assistance to communities of Northwest New Mexico. During the 3rd quarter of FY24, the COG focused legislative efforts to assist member governments, special districts and tribal entities with the development and submission of legislative funding requests.

A 30-day session is typically a fast-paced high intensity session primarily focused on developing the state budget for the upcoming fiscal year. While the 2024 session included some important bills, the focus remained on developing an effective and efficient budget to support New Mexico into the 2025 Fiscal Year. House Bill 2, General Appropriations Act provided the framework for \$10.21 Billion in recurring investment into the state of the New Mexico. An increase of 6.8% from the FY24 budget.

House Bill 2 General Appropriations Act including the following highlights:

- **Housing:** Appropriated \$125 million to the New Mexico Finance Authority's opportunity enterprise revolving fund, \$50 million to the housing trust fund at NM Mortgage Finance Authority, \$19.7 million for statewide homelessness initiatives, \$10 million for transitional housing and shelter facilities, and \$3.3 million for housing for those with opioid use disorders and serious mental illness.
- **Education:** Appropriated funding for a 3% raise for all school personnel, \$86 million for literacy initiatives, \$41 million for universal free school meals, \$15 million for pay differentials to recruit and retain hard-to-staff positions, \$6 million for special education initiatives, and \$5 million for attendance improvement interventions.
- **Public Safety:** Appropriated \$25 million for firefighter recruitment and \$25 million for corrections and law enforcement recruitment.
- **Infrastructure:** Appropriated \$540 million for road improvements, \$300 million for the conservation legacy permanent fund, \$75 million for the new "match fund", \$50 million for the water projects fund, \$25 million for broadband, \$20 million to support and funding Indian water rights settlements, and \$10 million to the Climate Investment Center.

Capital Outlay

During the third quarter, the COG ramped up our annual capital outlay technical assistance effort. Prior to the quarter, COG staff attended virtual training provided by DFA Local Government Division and the Legislative Council Services to ready for our annual technical assistance push. During the quarter, the COG planning team engaged in outreach to offer assistance to member governments, special districts and tribal entities including Navajo Nation Chapters. Assistance provided included projecteering, development of capital outlay requests, past appropriations research, reauthorization requests, and bill monitoring.

By the end of the session, COG staff assisted with the submission of 71 capital outlay requests, 12 Government Results & Opportunity program requests, over 10 reauthorizations, spent 3 days in Santa Fe, facilitated the collective discussion with the Governor, and contributed over 700 hours of staff dedicated to helping entities navigate and participate in the legislative process.

Community Development Block Grant

In early January, the COG was notified that the two applications for construction funding were awarded the full request amount. This meant that San Juan County would be awarded \$745,318 for ADA improvements to various public facilities, and McKinley County would be awarded \$750,000 for Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital Improvements.

Later in the quarter, the COG was informed by DFA that the CDBG fund was not fully encumbered and there was an additional \$4.6M left. DFA developed supplemental funding applications limited to governments previously awarded between the years 2022 – 2024. With that information in hand, COG acted quickly to inform the City of Grants, McKinley County and San Juan County of the opportunity to secure additional funding. COG staff then supported the applications for supplemental funding for McKinley and San Juan County.

CDBG supplemental funding awards are expected to be announced in Quarter 4 of 2024.



Return on Investment

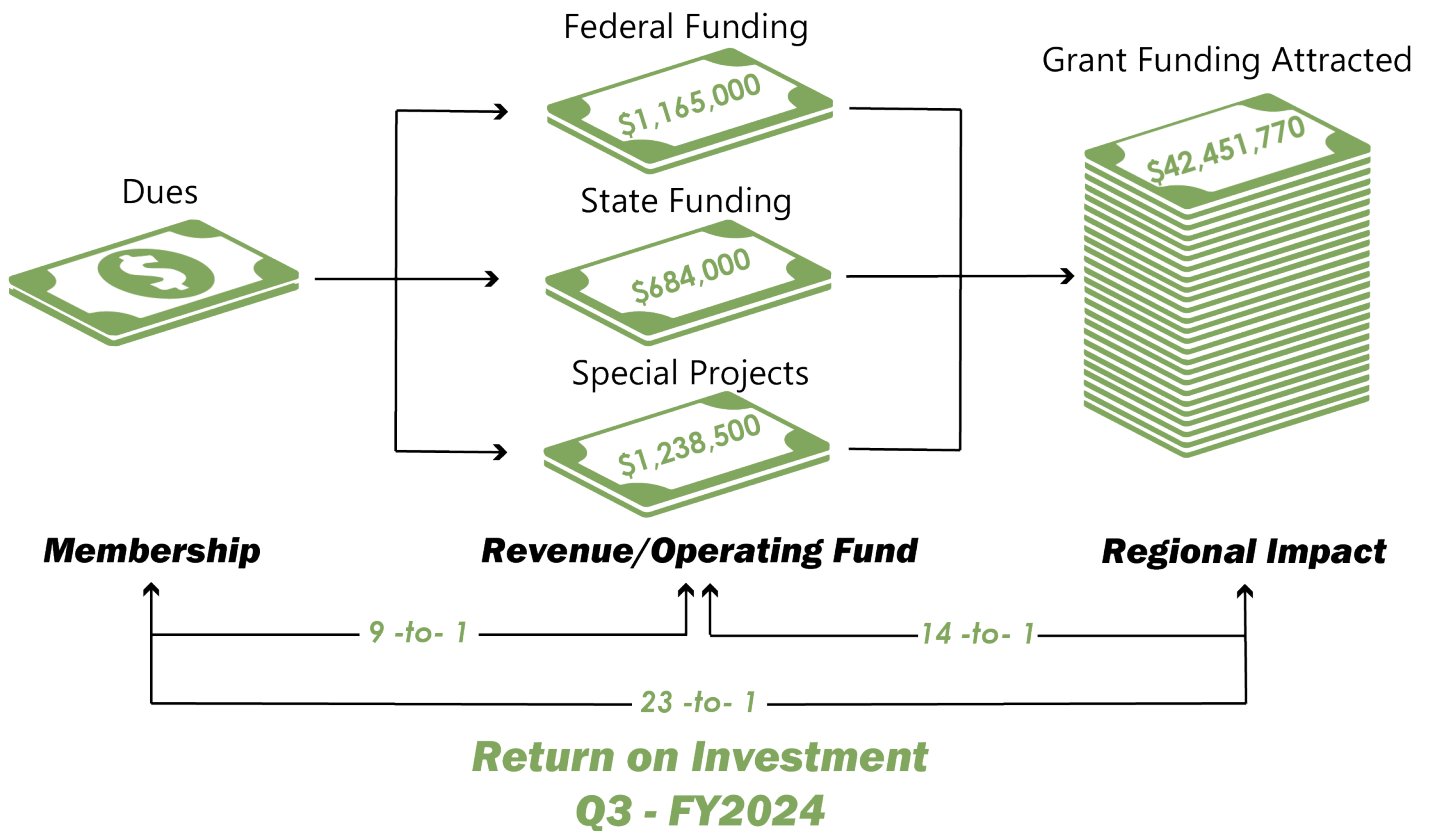
Since taking over the helm as Executive Director, Mr. Williams has worked with his staff to conduct annual return on investment reports to member governments who financially contribute to the COG. These reports include highlights of accomplishments and a monetary return on investment. At the end of each quarter and the fiscal year, each member government's return on investment is incorporated into a regional recap to help the COG showcase our value to the region.

At the beginning of the fiscal year, the COG planning team huddled up to identify and set the Regional Return on Investment Goal for the year. With numerous sources available and a large list of infrastructure and planning projects already assembled by our regional communities, the COG, based on current and anticipated work, set the FY24

Return on Investment goal at \$100M. This goal represents a 25% increase from the previous year's goal of \$75M.

After three quarters, the COG has attracted \$42.4 million in grant funding for the region. Some highlights include:

- \$750,000 from DFA Community Development Block Grant to McKinley County for RMCH Improvements
- \$3.6M from ALTSD Senior Center Capital Outlay to McKinley County for Ramah Senior Center
- \$745,318 from DFA Community Development Block Grant to San Juan County for ADA Improvements
- \$1,000,000 from Congressionally Directed Spending to the City of Gallup for Cast Iron Lines Replacement





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