

CONNECTING THE DOTS

NEWSLETTER



Volume 12, Issue 2

The Connecting the Dots Quarterly Newsletter is a product of the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

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Director's Note



I hope this email finds you well. A lot has changed. Along with all of you, the COG has been doing its best to navigate our current reality. Staff has embraced the new paradigm and is activating technology to continue to serve. COG staff is focused in three main arenas:

- Commitment to Delivering Service and Value;
- Learning about programs, opportunities, and disseminating Information; and
- Being flexibility and available to adopt if our mission changes in mission to support response and recovery of communities and our economy.

1. Commitment to Delivering Service and Value. Members should continue to expect, communicate, and hold us accountable for completing deliverables, including work programs and special projects. All COG meetings will continue on schedule, just on a virtual platform.

2. Information Dissemination. Every day, hour, and minute—it feels like we are getting an avalanche of information, programs, directives, and opportunities without much time to sort, select, and strategize on moving any of it into action. The COG has been working hard to read everything and disseminate information without overloading folks with unnecessary communications. Our modus operandi has been:

FILTER – triage information into two categories: (1) critical; and (2) not critical and then decide how best to send out critical information rather than just forwarding everything.

FUNNEL – send critical information to the right people that are in position to act on it.

FOLLOW-UP – information is only useful when it is transformed into knowledge that leads to action and translates into results. COG staff can dig into information, digest it, and recommend/take action.

3. Mission to Serve. The COG is in a unique position regionally to serve in the recovery of our communities and economy. Already, State and Federal entities have contacted us to help in planning for and delivery results during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and economic disruption. COG staff has reached out to local and tribal economic development organizations and other non-profits to understand where the best levers can



be built to reinforce and uplift our regional economy and create wealth that sticks. The COG and its partners will quickly develop investment strategies and projects that will not only get businesses back open, workers back to work, and GRT flowing again, but our niche will likely be planning, investing, and growing our region into a resilient and diverse economy for the future.

Lastly, I want to thank my staff for being ready to roll-up their sleeves.

Let's hope for the best and plan for the worst and use this crisis to move the COG forward into the future in terms of technology implementation and advancing the COG to serve the greatest good and highest while continuing to add value.

2020 Legislative Session Recap

One of the unique services that our COG provides for our region and our members is our legislative assistance and expertise. The COG assists in facilitating Legislative Forums, working on capital outlay requests, presenting to interim Legislative Committees, and tracking policy and legislation. This year, Evan Williams was dispatched to Santa Fe and participated in the 30-day Session that was focused primarily on the budget.

The big news is that the State Legislature is planning to go back into Session as early as June 10th due to the collapsing oil price with predictions it could drop to \$7.00 a barrel due to COVID-19 and the price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia. The State is looking at needing to cut between \$1.2B to \$2B from the FY21 budget just approved. This means that the State will be targeting every dollar they can get their hands on and for our members means encumber and spend everything that you have and expedite anything that you are planning to receive.

The COG published four “Snapshots of the Session” through the Session to keep members updated, these included:

- **Money Bills**—focused on breaking down all legislation that provided funding to State and local needs, programs, and projects.
- **Veto City**—focused on the Governor’s action including her targeted vetoes to reduce spending caused by dramatic decline of oil prices.
- **Priority Bills**—reviewed the status of priority legislation that impacts our region and local governments, including funding bills, transportation and economic development related, and bills that impact local government either positive or negative.
- **Escalante**—focused on all legislation and funding that was directed to assist our region’s recovery from the closure of the Prewitt Escalante Generating Station in December 2020 or those bills that could be leveraged to assist the bi-county area.

Some take-aways from this Session and preparing for the next.

1. **Executive Order 2013-006:** Executive Order #6 and other agency regulations are important to comply with. It is critical that all entities meet the Executive Order and discuss bottlenecks and issues with Legislators on regulations that are stifling projects.
2. **Certifications:** Agencies should be calling you for information on your projects and funding. Since much of the appropriations in the Capital Outlay bill are supported by severance tax bonds—it will be critical to certify projects for the June bond sale. The Governor has until March 11th to act. Call the COG if you need help with certifications.
3. **Spend Baby Spend:** The winners next year will be those entities that are ready to spend once the Governor signs the capital outlay bill, in terms of procurement, fast-tracking projects with on-call contractors, and implementing “quick strike” project teams that meet regularly. Capital Outlay funding is split between general fund cash and severance tax bond. Vendors and contractors will be getting swamped—let’s be ready to wade through it quickly. House Bill 2 Junior appropriations from last Session expire on June 30th.
4. **Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP):** Need to think about how the ICIP ties into Legislative requests and regional priorities. The Capital Outlay request is now tied to ICIP language — please update all “Legislative language” sections of priority projects. Need to transform the ICIP into your entities’ planning tool and make it useful to you — NOT A WISHLIST. Double check LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE — add key verbs, e.g. construction management, purchase and equip, etc.
5. **Projecteering:** Need continuous improvement and discussion on projecteering to move projects from concept to completion. What projects did not get fully funded? Bring these to the COG and discuss other funding opportunities. This is one of the things the COG does well. We know where the funding is and the strategies to get it.

6. Escalante Generating Station Next Steps: House Bill 8 was approved and signed into law. This bill was amended to allow Cibola County one year (until December 31, 2020) to opt-in to the authority with McKinley County or not. COG is happy to provide presentations on the planning work done under the HM72/41 Committee that included stakeholders from both counties, and the actual legislation and other supporting pieces and how they fit into the future of our regional economy and workforce.

7. Say Thank You: Legislators often get criticized for many things, and almost never get thanked for the job they do and the accomplishments they achieve. Send a letter thanking them for capital outlay and other appropriations. Host a press conference. Invite them to a groundbreaking. Invite them to report out to your elected body. Same goes for Executive staff and Departments that supported us in the process. Did you say thank you yet?



Gallup-McKinley County Day at the Legislative meeting with Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham

Assistance to Coal Communities (ACC)

On September 25, 2019, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments was awarded \$988,400 from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA). This award was based on a \$540,000 that was provided by the State Legislature. The focus of this funding was to support a workforce development initiative and the planning and design of industrial parks in Prewitt and Milan.

The COG quickly put these dollars into the region. The COG has contracts with:

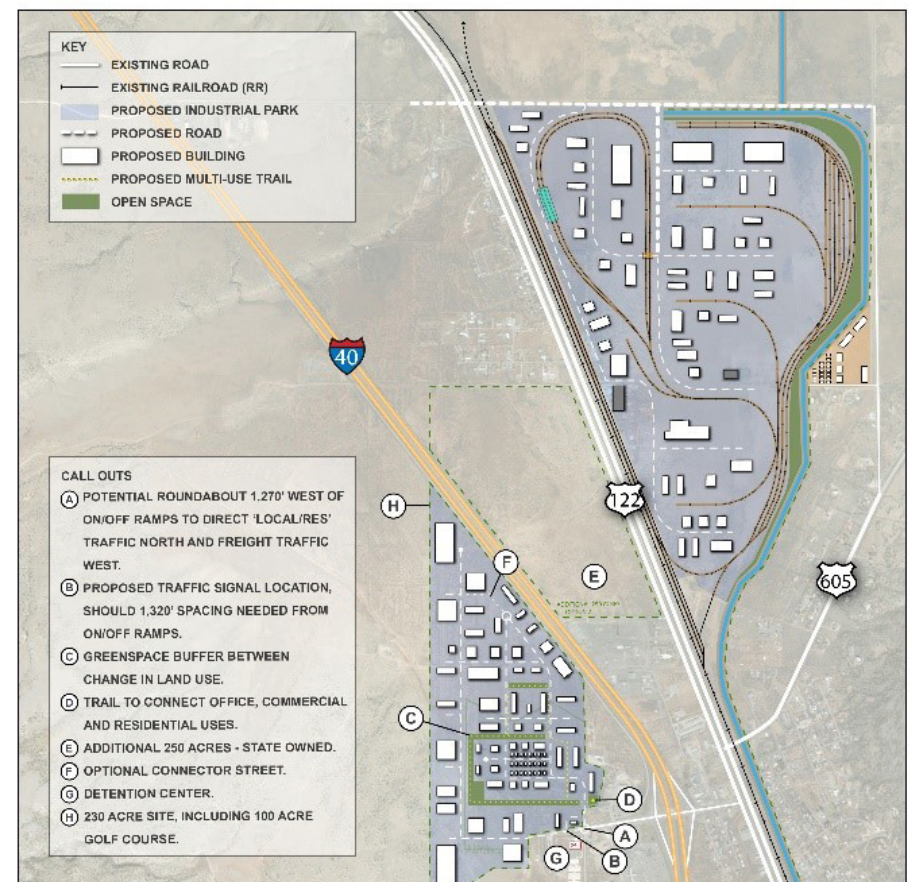
- Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation
- International Business Connection, Ltd.
- Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation
- Wilson & Company

Each of these has a role in completing the tasks that EDA was promised in our application. In the last "Connecting the Dots" edition, we focused on the Greater Gallup Industrial Workforce Program and the graduation of its first cohort. Well, on March 27, 2020, this program graduated its second cohort of hungry and skilled-up workers into apprenticeships and regional employment.

The other major pieces that were fast-tracked for completion by June 2020 were the planning and conceptual designs at the Prewitt and Milan Industrial Parks, including spec building designs. These products are being drafted and will be reviewed by local entities and partners. These products are still on pace to be completed and available by June 2020.

The image to the right is the initial proposed build-out at the Milan Industrial Park and the consultants also put some land use and development guidance for another proposed non-rail served mixed use area for Milan.

"The Trump Administration is working tirelessly to champion areas around the country that have been adversely impacted by the closures of coal-fired power plants," said U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Dr. John Fleming. "These workforce training programs will help increase business and job creation in New Mexico's Four corners region."



Industrial Park Master Plan - Land Use

0 0.3 0.6
Miles



CDBG Update

Community Development Council (CDC) Special Meeting

1. **CDBG 2020 Application Cycle** — no decisions to change due dates at this point.
2. **Small Business Assistance Program** — approval for LGD to establish program based on HUD guidance and recommendation.

In September, the Forest Service received an order from the United States District Court for the District of Arizona stating that the agency's "timber management" actions must cease pending a formal consultation regarding potential effects to the Mexican spotted owl. Based on this order, an injunction has stopped any and all work including trail building that involves timber activities. This has limited and all but ceased our trail building activities for the season related to the Milk Ranch & McGaffey Trail project.

- **Program Criteria** — to be established by LGD/COGs, including award levels, grant/loan make-up, and criteria
- **Program Administration** — COGs expected to implement like the Big Freeze Program (under Gov. Martinez)
- **Program Funding** — \$1,080,000 from CDBG Planning funds and reverted CDBG Construction funds.

The goal of the program would be for rural areas (currently all non-Entitlement Communities) and for those businesses that might fall through the cracks or not qualify for other COVID-19 resources (such as loans, etc.). Criteria might include things like: population size, unemployment rate, LMI %, annual revenues, and business survival risk (these were just provided as food for thought by Director Donnie Quintana). No admin was discussed, and the issue was raised in terms of COG roll-out with restrictions in terms of work from home and direct client services.

3. **LGD Business as Usual** — in terms of CDBG/Legislative/PILT/SRS administration, invoices, payments, bond certs, clawbacks, etc.

Local Government Division staff is doing yeomen's work. Open CDBG projects should be implemented/completed.

In other news...

In accordance with *NMSA 1978, Section 1 1-6-4(B)(5)*, the COG's former executive director, **Jeff Kiely**, was selected and appointed — by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and the Secretary of State, Maggie Toulouse Oliver — to represent the state's **District 1** region and community. Congratulations!

Together, we will continue to move our region forward.

**"Leading the Field to
Empower Communities and
Move the Region"**

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The COG did provide written comments to the CDC via Jeff Kiely (Region 1 Representatives) and verbal comments were put forward by our NewMARC Director (Statewide COG Association) Priscilla Lucero, Executive Director, Southwest NM Council of Governments. This meeting was handled via WebEx.

Trail of the Ancients Byway



America's Scenic Byways Act of 2019" into law by President Trump and FHWA program guidance.



For several the decades, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments and its Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) program have been involved in promoting and designating scenic byways as a tool to market the region to travelers and locals alike. In December 2019, President Donald J. Trump signed the new National Scenic Byway Bill "Reviving

COG staff are undertaking a challenging process to gain recognition and designation for portions of our **Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway** as a National Scenic Byway. On February 13th, the Federal Highway Administration launched the nomination portal for electronic submission of applications. Applications are due to NMDOT by May 1st. The agency then has until May 15th to submit statewide

nominations to FHWA. We also have re-formed the Byway Council with representatives from each jurisdiction who are helping with the application and support letters.

What you can do to support our application:

- **Letters of Support** on your letterhead to Robert Kuipers, RTPO Program Manager based on our template by April 24th;
- **Sign-on** joint applications; or
- **Contact** your Transportation Commissioners, Congressmen, Senators, the Governor and the President.

A quick summary of the COG's involvement:

- **2002:** State of New Mexico lifts moratorium and announces a deadline for nominations of new State scenic byway designation. COG rallies the region, assembles a steering committee, defines the byway, and submits a nomination application for the Native Heritage Trail.
- **October 2002:** State of New Mexico designates the Native Heritage Trail as a State scenic byway.

- **2003 – 2005:** Organizational development of the Byway Council and planning for the byway commenced.
- **2007:** COG and its partners successfully petitioned the State Transportation Commission to rename this byway as "Trail of the Ancients" New Mexico as this evaluate the byway's chance to gain Federal status in connection with TOTA-CO and TOTA-UT that were already designated, and the hopes of getting a Four Corners byway in all four States.
- **2008:** A Corridor Management Plan was completed for the byway.
- **2008:** The Trail of the Ancients Byway Association, supported by the COG, developed and submitted an application for Federal nominate as a National scenic byway, but were rejected.
- **2009-2012:** The Trail of the Ancients Byway Association was active facilitated by the COG and received several byway grants including signage, kiosks at State/Federal/local visitor centers, marketing, and physical improvements.
- **2012-2019:** The Trail of the Ancients Byway Association morphed into other initiatives or associations including Region 1 Tourism Board, RTPO, and/or Four Corners Geotourism Stewardship Council, of which the COG has continued to be active partner.

The designation of National Scenic Byways are determined by six (6) "Intrinsic Qualities":

- Scenic Quality,
- Natural Quality,
- Historic Quality,
- Cultural Quality,
- Archeological Quality and
- Recreational Quality

The corridor we are proposing for national designation possesses all six intrinsic qualities in abundance, but we must choose a primary one, which will be archeological with a secondary of cultural qualities, which should help differentiate our byway from others in nation.

2020 Census

The US Census 2020 Self Response total rate as of April 4th 2020 for the State of New Mexico is 33.6% with the National Self-Response rate of 44.5%.

- Cibola County Self-Response has 11.4% compared to NM's 33.6%. McKinley County has 9.3% of NM's 33.6%. San Juan County Self-Response has 26.0% of NM's 33.6%.
- Acoma Pueblo Self-Response rate has 1.7% compared to National rate of 44.5%. Laguna Pueblo Self-Response rate has 2.1% of National rate of 44.5%. Zuni has 3.7% of National rate of 44.5%. Navajo has 0.3% of National rate of 44.5%.
- City of Aztec Self-Response is 34.7% of NM's 33.6%. City of Bloomfield Self-Response is 31.8% of NM's 33.6%. City of Gallup Self-Response is 27.4% of NM's 33.6%. City of Grants Self-Response is 33.5% of NM's 33.6%. City of Kirtland Self-Response is 29.2% of NM's 33.6%. City of Milan S-R is 2.6% of NM's 33.6%. City of Farmington S-R is 39.8% of NM's 33.6%.

Welcome to the 2020 Census

- It's quick and easy. The 2020 Census questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete.
- It's safe, secure, and confidential. Your information and privacy are protected.
- Your response helps to direct billions of dollars in federal funds to local communities for schools, roads, and other public services.
- Results from the 2020 Census will be used to determine the number of seats each state has in Congress and your political representation at all levels of government.

Getting started:

- You must complete your questionnaire once you begin. If you leave the questionnaire and return later, you will have to start over.
- Do not use the web browser buttons (back, forward, or close browser). Use the buttons within the questionnaire to navigate.
- For best results, use the latest version of Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, or Safari. Enable cookies.

Shape
your future
START HERE >

United States®
**Census
2020**

Start Questionnaire

Each New Mexican is approximately worth \$5000 a year in federal funding, \$50,000 before the next Census 2030. This year, the stakes are higher and we can do this.

Each year, Census data informs federal funding for more than 100 programs, including school lunches, highway construction, and education. Census results affect planning and funding for healthcare—including programs such as Medicaid, Medicare Part B, State Children's Health Insurance, and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse. The 2020 Census will be valuable to businesses, as the results will provide a rich set of data on the communities they serve, including population trends and growth projections. Business owners rely on census results to make decisions, such as where to open new stores, restaurants, factories, or offices, where to expand operations, where to recruit employees, and which products and services to offer.

The U.S. Constitution mandates that the country count its population once every 10 years. The results are used to adjust or redraw electoral districts, based on where populations have increased or decreased. The NWCOG's, Carrie House, is nearing the secure submission deadline for the US Census Participants Area Statistical Program (PSAP), Geographic Partnership Program. The 3 county northwest region updates include Census Tract, Blocks, Block Groups, County Census Divisions, and Census Designated Places.



Importance of the Data

The 2020 Census will inform hundreds of billions in federal funding, and provide data that will impact communities for the next decade.

[READ MORE >](#)

<https://2020census.gov/en/community-impact.html>

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update

CEDS Spotlight

A Showcase of Best Practices from Across the Country



description of current conditions versus data from the 2010 Census. Census 2020 data while underway will not be available for a few more years and will be captured in the next update of the CEDS.

Due to COVID-19, the remaining components of the CEDS to be developed and which require regional collaboration and input will need to be completely remotely and through digital mediums.

The remaining schedule for completion is as follows:

- April 2020 – Digital SWOT / Economic Resilience
- May 2020 – Review Draft
- June 2020 – Final Draft
- July 2020 – Publish CEDS

Development of the 2020-2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Northwest New Mexico is underway.

The addition by EDA of new components into the CEDS proved to be extremely timely. Economic Resilience or the ability of a community to collectively respond to a disaster whether it be natural or man-made requires regions to assess capacity and develop strategies to ensure rapid, focus response. COVID-19 and the national transition away from coal have provided tremendous stress on the regional economy and each requires custom resilience approaches. Recent designations by the US Treasury of census tracts as Qualified Opportunity Zones necessitates region develop plans for their promotion and marketing. Within Northwest New Mexico, scattered among rural and urban confines, there are ten (10) Qualified Opportunity Zones.

Currently, data gathering is nearing completion on the CEDS and will be based on US Census Bureau 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey, which provides a more accurate



Opportunity Zones (OZ) Brochure

Qualified Opportunity Zones

QOZ Brochures

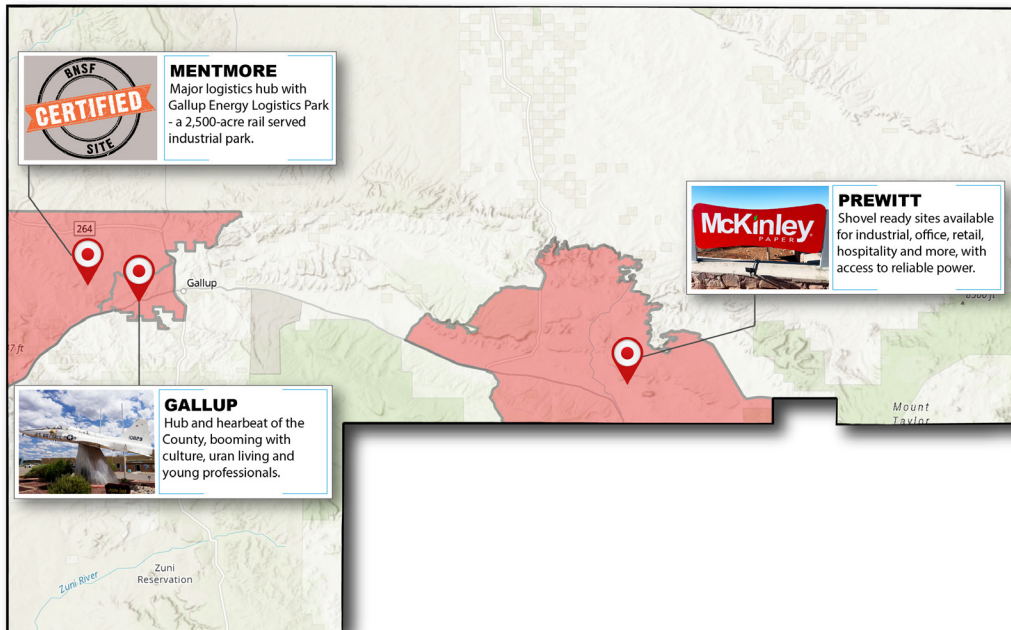
Seeking to build momentum on the recent designation of ten (10) Census Tracts in the northwest region of New Mexico as Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZ).

NWNMCOG has undertaken an initiative to develop QOZ brochures for each of the three counties.

These brochures are designed to highlight communities and to promote local economic development projects for potential investment, while representing best practices as identified by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the US Economic Development Administration (EDA).

1. Cibola County – **COMPLETED**
2. McKinley County – **COMPLETED**
3. San Juan County – **In Development**

Recently, NWNMCOG submitted a concept proposal to US EDA as part of their Capital Challenge program to establish a Qualified Opportunity Fund for Northwest New Mexico; a funding mechanism for raising and investing capital into projects located in qualified opportunity zones.



Above image displays areas with the most potential investment interest for economic development.

Left image focuses on the Milan Industrial Cluster, with respect to the Pueblo of Laguna.



