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COUNCIL OF  
GOVERNMENTS

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# Connecting the Dots

*Serving San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola County Governments for 40 years!*

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## SPOTLIGHT: CITY OF GALLUP

### Gallup-McKinley County Veterans



**Local Veteran Ken Riege of Veterans Helping Veterans, with Gov. Martinez at the National Cemetery announcement on April 15. Mr. Riege was instrumental in garnering Gallup's designation as "Most Patriotic Small Town in America".**

In mid-April, **Governor Susana Martinez** announced the selection of Gallup as one of four proposed sites for a new rural **national veterans cemetery**. This selection was the result of steady and dedicated efforts by the **City of Gallup**, the **Gallup-McKinley County Veterans Committee**, and others to honor our local veterans. Other selected sites include Angel Fire in northern New Mexico, Carlsbad and Fort Stanton in southern New Mexico.

In July 2013, the Governor initiated the **Strategic Veterans Cemetery Initiative**, which would allow the State to apply for a **Veterans Administration (VA) Veterans Cemetery Grant**; the grant would build VA-funded/State-managed veterans cemeteries in rural communities in New Mexico. The criteria for submission included **\$600,000 in down payment to plan, design and construct** regional cemeteries statewide.

If selected, the VA will provide the funding required to design and construct

the cemeteries. Estimated cost to build one cemetery can range from \$1.3 to \$1.6 million.

The plan would be to build several state managed final resting places for veterans in their home area, thus eliminating the need to travel hundreds of miles to lay a veteran to rest or for families wishing to visit the burial site of a loved one.

New Mexico currently has two national cemeteries, which are located in Santa Fe in central northern New Mexico and Fort Bayard near Silver City in southwestern New Mexico. Fort Bliss National Cemetery in El Paso, Texas is also the final resting place for many New Mexico Veterans living in the southern part of the State.

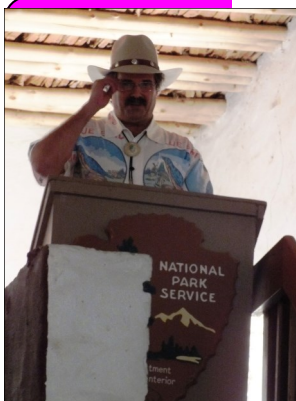
Gallup was one of ten communities that expressed interest in submitting a proposal during a town hall meeting hosted by **Lt. Governor John Sanchez** last summer (2013).

With assistance from the **Council of Governments** and the **City of Gallup**, the **Gallup-McKinley County Veterans Committee** submitted a proposal to establish a cemetery in Gallup.

For over a decade the Gallup McKinley County Veterans Committee has worked diligently on expanding and upgrading the current Veterans Plot at the Hillcrest Cemetery in Gallup. Over the years, the Committee has worked with both the City of Gallup and **McKinley County** to secure local funding and with **local legislators** to leverage State funds. These funds have been used for various initiatives including a feasibility study,



## Regional Planner Bob Kuipers Leaves COG



Bob Kuipers gives a keynote in the Great Kiva at the National Geographic Four Corners Geotourism Launch in June 2012.

With just over six years under his belt with the Council of Governments, Robert Kuipers, decided to resign his position as Regional Planner in early May. Bob came to the Council of Governments back in 2008 when he started as the EPA CARE Planner and later took on facilitation and management of the Regional Planning Organization (RPO). It is perhaps the COG's work leading the Regional Transportation Planning Organization, that reminds us of Bob and his work with the COG, who often called upon the members of the RTPRO for their input and contributions to transportation improvements including roads, bridges, public transit, and city streets throughout the region.

But, that was not his only contributions to the COG and the region. He was also heavily involved in the National Geographic Four Corners Geo-tourism Project from its inception in 2011 and later serving on the project's Stewardship Council. National Geographic established the Four Corners region as one of only 17 of the magazine's "world-class destinations". Bob worked so dedicatedly and diligently on this Project that he was also invited to give a keynote address at the launch in the Great Kiva of the Aztec Ruins in Aztec, NM in June 2012.

As part of the COG team, Bob brought professionalism, courtesy, and a cup of coffee with a friendly, "Good morning" on a daily basis. Bob will be missed by all the COG staff and by our partners in the region, but we wish Bob the best of luck in his new endeavors and many

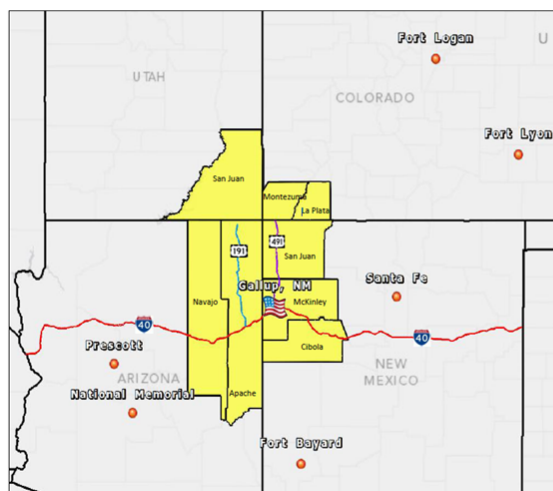
## Continued from Front Page: Veterans Committee Seeks National Veterans Cemetery

planning and design work, and for obtaining clearance documents to expand or build a veterans cemetery.

The requirements for the cemetery included: (a) a site of three to five acres – sufficient land to bury veterans and eligible family members for a 20 to 50 year period (b) cemetery location must be easily accessible (3) clear and legislative authority from the state to establish and operate a State Veterans Cemetery in accordance with VA standards. Evan Williams, Deputy Director, with assistance from COG staff members, Prestene Garnenez and Bebe Sarmiento, and Gallup McKinley County Veterans Committee member and former City of Gallup Planner **Lisa Baca Diaz** drafted the proposal on behalf of the City of Gallup. Gallup's proposal showcased our readiness, merit, respect and community support for our Veterans. Most certainly, the **City of Gallup's** recent designation as Rand McNally's "**Most Patriotic Small Town in America**" provided additional value, support, and advantage to the proposal and the quest for a National Veterans Cemetery.

The next steps for the City of Gallup is to ensure the State

CURRENT NATIONAL VETERANS CEMETERIES  
FOUR CORNERS REGION



December 2013

| State | County    | Veterans % |
|-------|-----------|------------|
| AZ    | Apache    | 8.7%       |
| AZ    | Navajo    | 9.7%       |
| CO    | La Plata  | 10.0%      |
| CO    | Montezuma | 12.3%      |
| NM    | Cibola    | 9.9%       |
| NM    | McKinley  | 6.8%       |
| NM    | San Juan  | 8.5%       |
| UT    | San Juan  | 5.7%       |

Potential Regional Reach of a National Cemetery in Gallup, NM

Santa Fe National Cemetery is approximately 200 miles from Gallup, NM.

of New Mexico submits the four applications no later than **July 1, 2014** to the Veterans Administration. Proposals will be processed along with others received from around the county and notification of selection will be made in **October 2014**. If awarded, the City of Gallup can expect **construction to begin in 2015**. **Go Gallup!!**

## Rural Northwest New Mexico Gears Up for SET

An exciting launch of the SET (Stronger Economies Together) Initiative has generated much anticipation, and it's gaining momentum with each workshop.

The New Mexico Rural Development office of USDA selected our 3-county region of Northwest New Mexico as a "SET" region. The COG is working with USDA, NMSU-Extension and regional partners in helping lead this initiative.

SET is intended to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America and foster a working collaborative to develop and implement an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of a region.

Our SET initiative is being organized around the rural corridors that make up the "Trail of the Ancients" Scenic Byway (so that's the brand name of the SET initiative; take a look at the map) with study/action groups in San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola Counties and quarterly regional meetings by all participants from the three counties coming together.

The SET process will involve monthly seminars/workshops covering 8 modules which will include cooperative work toward creating a high-quality regional Rural Development Plan that will be utilized to leverage federal, state, and other local funds and resources to move projects and initiatives in rural Northwest New Mexico.

The SET work will form the foundations of a Rural Leadership & Development Academy in our region, with SET participants as founding members. Those who complete 7 of 8 SET modules will receive certificates signed by NMSU Vice-President Kevin Boberg.



The 'kick-off' meetings were well attended and equally publicized by regional newspapers with the help of USDA's New Mexico State Director, Terry Brunner. In late April and early May, Module 1 "Building a Regional Team" was conducted via three sessions: at Dine College-North in Shiprock; at the Zuni Campus of UNM-Gallup; and at the NMSU-Grants campus. All three meetings were guided by NMSU economist Dr. Michael Patrick and COG Executive Director Jeff Kiely.

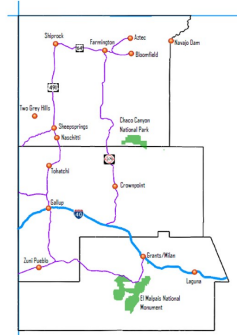
The Module 1: workshop was partly introduction for new participants and partly robust discussion time, as participants talked about initiatives, barriers, and benefits to growing rural parts of Northwest New Mexico. Many additional organizations and individuals were identified as potentially strong partners, participants, and resources to move the SET Initiative forward. Participants were given "homework" to reach out to bring in these organizations and/or individuals to become active participants in SET workshops.

Clearly an added benefit for attendants is the networking capability the SET forums provides for participants. Standout potential rural economic interests from this initial session include tourism, food sustainability, and agriculture which fostered plenty of opportunity for participants to connect and discuss.

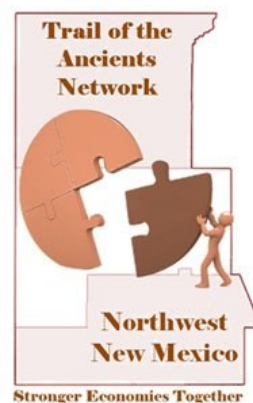
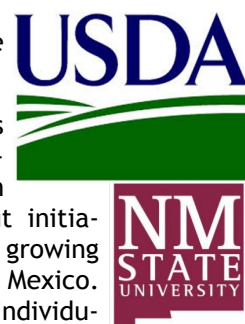
The next SET workshops are set for May 28 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Shiprock, and May 29 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 in Grants, and later in the afternoon from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00p.m. in Zuni. A regional SET session is planned for late June at Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint.

To learn more, visit the website: [www.theprosperitycollaborative.com](http://www.theprosperitycollaborative.com) and click on the "SET" tab. You may also sign up at the website.

### Trail of the Ancients Network



### Stronger Economies Together





# Regional Transportation News

## Completion of 491!

Great news coming out of the Northwest New Mexico Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) is the State of New Mexico's commitment to provide the much needed funding to complete the four-lane development of US-491 from Naschitti to Twin Lakes.



**Top: McKinley County Commissioners, Senator Pinto, Secretary Allison, and Governor Martinez join in photos at the announcement to complete the four-laning of US 491.**

**Bottom: Commissioner Jackson Gibson takes time for photos with Miss Northern Navajo.**

On March 25, a ceremony was held near Naschitti as New Mexico Governor Susanna Martinez announced the State's commitment to complete the project. The first phases to complete the four-laning of US highway 491 will begin in Naschitti and then head south to Twin Lakes. Cabinet Secretary Tom Church and Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly were also speakers at the event. Each gave appreciation and praise to District 6 Transportation Commissioner **Jackson Gibson** and State Senator **John Pinto** for their persistent dedication and efforts to see this project through to completion. This new four lane corridor, which intersects with I-40 and the BNSF rail corridor in Gallup, sets up our region for significant economic base opportunities including industry development and potential rail-to-freight transloading facilities in Thoreau and on Gallup Partners properties west of Gallup. The completion of US 491 bears potential for hundreds of new jobs, at high annual salaries for our local population within the region!

## In other NWRTPO News...

The NWRTPO continues to participate in multiple statewide updates on:

- (1) Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan (and our own region's Long Range Transportation Plan,
- (2) New Planning Procedures Manual, which offers policy guidance for the role of statewide MPO's (*Metropolitan Planning Organizations*) and RTPO's (*Regional Transportation Planning Organizations*). The Manual also describes the collaborative relationship between MPOs/RTPOs and the NMDOT.
- (3) Freight Plan,
- (4) Rail Plan,
- (5) Strategic Highway Safety Plan;
- (6) Federal "Functional Classification Updates" — In our northwest region, we will not be seeking any



ONE TEAM. ONE VISION. ONE VOICE.

## *Transportation News continued from Page 4*

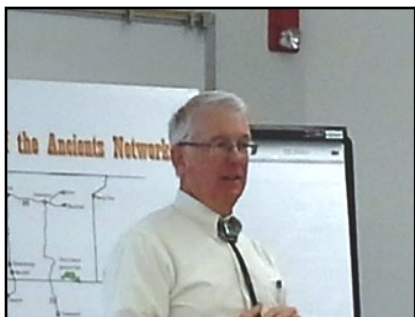
functional class upgrades. Two roads of interest were Navajo 36 (near the Navajo Nation's new casino, Northern Edge, in San Juan County), but that is a BIA road (not subject to FHWA functional classification), and NM-118 east of Gallup (also near another Navajo Nation casino in McKinley County) but that also is already at its highest classification possible, a principal arterial.

A statewide meeting took place on January 9 which covered 1.) a tribal orientation and consultation on the LRTP, and 2.) the RTP/MPO Coordinating committee for the LRTP update process; a second statewide RTP/MPO/DOT Roundtable took place March 10 & 11 to review progress for these planning initiatives, and to review the first draft (after an initial round of edits) of the new Planning Procedures Manual. On February 26, we also convened our own northwest Regional Transportation Plan

Working Group at the Gallup Chamber of Commerce, to commence the update for our region's LRTP; this meeting was well attended with 22 representatives from all three counties in attendance.

Last, but certainly not least, as noted in this issue, Regional Planner and RTP/MPO Program Manager Bob Kuipers resigned his position at the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments. We wish Bob the best; however, the Council of Governments is currently looking to fill the Regional Planner/RTP/MPO Program Manager position as soon as possible. Interested parties may contact our Human Resources department: Teresa Mecale at (505) 722-4327 for a full vacancy announcement and application packet. Please be assured that we're looking to find the best possible candidate to fill this important position.

## **Notes from the Executive Director...**



Along with the "high-desert hurricanes" we've been getting this Spring, we continue to see the winds of change in the economy. Some of it's pretty good, and some of it brings more challenge.

On the challenging side, we've still got a lot of work to "crack the code" of unemployment and poverty in the region. We realize there's no "silver bullet," and that it takes a lot of different efforts, from many different angles, by a whole network of players and participants. That's our work!

On the other hand, we do have an up-tick in industrial activity (and employment) in the San Juan Basin, largely stimulated by oil development in the Mancos Shale play. We've got bond funding for the completion of the 4-laning of US Highway 491. And we've got positive developments trying to happen in each of the three counties, highlighted by intermodal/transloading industrial park development in Gallup and broadband development in Grants.

We have three great economic development groups serving our respective counties: **Cibola Communities Economic Development Foundation** operating out of Grants ([Eileen Yarbrough](#), Executive Director); **Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation** operating out of Gallup ([Patty Lundstrom](#), Executive Director); and **Four Corners Economic Development** operating out of Farmington ([Ray Hagerman](#), CEO). With that kind of talent and focus, there is great hope for new development in our region. These three economic leaders were partners and co-sponsors with us of the Economic Forums held in each of the counties last December, and they will continue to help us analyze all the input, gaze into our crystal balls on future trends and possibilities, and gather it all within the region's *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (the "CEDS").

Speaking of the CEDS, we're also getting some help from consultant [Jim Glover](#), principal of The Idea Group of Santa Fé, who will help us organize our mountains of information to fashion a clear, coherent and actionable CEDS plan.

*[continued on back page]*



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| Important Dates  | Date     | Place         |
|--|----------|---------------|
| NWRTPO Committee Meeting                                     | May 14   | TBA           |
| Memorial Day—COG Offices Closed                              | May 26   | Gallup        |
| SET Module 2: Exploring Demographic and Economic Foundations | May 28   | Shiprock      |
| SET Module 2: Exploring Demographic and Economic Foundations | May 29   | Grants & Zuni |
| NADO Board Summer Retreat                                    | June 7-9 | Stevenson, WA |
| NWRTPO   | June 11  | TBA           |
| 2016-2020 ICIPs Due for Special Districts                    | June 16  | Santa Fe      |
| Independence Day—COG Offices Closed                          | July 4   | Gallup        |
| CDBG Implementation Workshop                                 | July 23  | Albuquerque   |

**“Leading the Field to Empower Communities  
& Move the Region for 40 years”**

## *Notes from the Director continued from previous page*

Jim also helped us with Aztec’s Vision Plan, and he’s now working in the Farmington area to help the area’s leaders with branding and marketing the community. Additionally, we’ve just contracted with Jim to help with the statewide CEDS, which your COG is helping lead along with the other 6 COGs who make up the New Mexico Association of Regional Councils (NewMARC). We were all there in Hobbs last month for the Economic Development Summit sponsored by the New Mexico Economic Development Department and the Rural Alliance.

So ... lot’s going on in the economic development world! Even as we speak, we’re launching a new initiative sponsored by USDA-Rural Development in New Mexico called “SET” (for “Stronger Economies Together”), based on USDA’s designation of this region as a site for the SET program. It’s a series of monthly learning/planning sessions instructed by NMSU Extension out of Las Cruces, with the end goal of producing a “high quality plan” for rural development in our region. Because of the size of our region (15,000 square miles), we’re implementing SET on a county-by-county basis, with sessions each month in each of San Juan (Shiprock), McKinley (Zuni) and Cibola (Grants) Counties. Every 3 or 4 months, we’ll all come together as a broader region to share the learnings and plans shaping up in each county. It’s “open enrollment” ... so give Prestene a call at the COG if you want to sign up! 505-722-4327; [pgarnenez@nwnmcog.com](mailto:pgarnenez@nwnmcog.com). Many thanks to Dr. Michael Patrick of the NMSU Extension Service, who

serves as lead instructor for the SET program and Bob Koenen of USDA-Rural Development, who’s serving as the SET liaison for USDA.

We’re also engaged in regional and statewide long-range transportation planning, as well as regional and statewide long-range water planning. Never a dull moment, and it’s all in service to helping New Mexico – and our spot in it – to grow and prosper!

Even as we tackle these issues and join in with these great coalitions, we also have organizational challenges to wrestle with. Staffing-wise, we’ve said farewell to 2 of our staff, most recently Bob Kuipers, who worked with us for 6 years. He left us on excellent terms, and we wish him the very best in his next journeys. So we’ve got a couple of positions open and looking for “COG material” out there who are ready to join our team.

We’re also looking at the specter of having to relocate our whole operation in the coming half-year. The State DOT has decided to bulldoze our current property (owned by McKinley County) in order to get at the underground bridges and other structures underpinning the State road coming right by our building (NM 602, known as 2<sup>nd</sup> Street within the City). We’re looking for new digs, and we welcome suggestions ... and support for the move!

Jeff Kiely, Executive Director