

A photograph of a dirt road winding through a grassy field with pine trees in the background. The road is reddish-brown and curves to the right. The field is filled with dry, yellowish grass and some small yellow flowers. In the background, there is a dense line of green pine trees under a clear blue sky.

Connecting the Dots

Quarterly Newsletter of the
NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Notes from the Director



Dear Friends,

As we welcome the Autumn Winds, we hope also for moisture from the heavens – gently to our soils, deeply on our mountains, eager to flow back into our rivers come Spring and Summer.

And while the conflicts and turmoils of our turbulent world swirl around us, and flood our iPhones with news we’d rather not hear ... yet within our beautiful region, we hear voices of vision, hope and collaboration. It’s why we do what we do ... stretching and straining to build, to improve, to expand opportunity, to build partnerships, to increase the means needed to enhance the well-being of our citizens.

In early November, we again welcomed several dozen friends and partners from throughout the Four Corners states in “Four Corners Future Forum 2.0” – a year removed from “Forum 1.0”, again graciously hosted by Dr. Toni Pendergrass and her team at San Juan College. Led by a strong public-private leadership team chaired by Arvin Trujillo from APS/4 Corners Power Plant, the conference resulted in a shared determination to mesh gears, lock arms and work together on initiatives of potential benefit across the Four Corners – focused first on expansion of broadband infrastructure and the fashioning of a regional “brand” and marketing strategy.

Oh, and by the way, y’all. San Juan College has received a much-coveted “University Center” designation by the EDA Austin Regional Office – a great achievement, with some strong work to come in the field of local and regional food systems. Oh, and by the way. Navajo Technical University also got some love from EDA-Austin by way of a \$1.4 million grant to build a new metrology lab on the NTU campus in Crownpoint. Another shining star in our region!

Also in eastern McKinley County, we just received the final report from Foote Consulting on economic cluster opportunities in the Prewitt Industrial Cluster, associated with the Escalante Generating Station and its industrial partners. We hope this will provide guidance and impetus for proactively recruiting and developing new business (and jobs!) in tandem with the industrial assets still at work ... before the time comes for phase-out of the plant..

Speaking of jobs, we remain in close communication with local stakeholders in McKinley County and with the program staff at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on plans for a McKinley County Workforce Pathways Network – looking for breakthroughs in creating training and employability linkages between job seekers and employers.

In late Summer and early Fall, we joined forces with Southwest Conservation Corps to start the real trail-building work in the Zuni Mountains in early phases of what promises to be a world-class recreational destination for generations to come. And in early October, we started work as managers of the Farmington MPO program, under contract to the City of Farmington and in service to the Cities of Aztec, Bloomfield, & Farmington, the Town of Kirtland & San Juan County.

Lots going on ... So best wishes for a great Fall season, and in the meantime, say Hey to my new grandson River!



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- Jeff



Zuni Mountains Trails Partnership



This Summer and Fall, the COG managed a contract to implement the first on-the-ground trail-building project of the Zuni Mountains Trails Project under Federal funding awarded to McKinley and Cibola Counties. This first project was carried out in the “Milk Ranch” area near McGaffey in the Zuni Mountains.

COG Associate Planner Carrie House teamed up with trail expert Strider Brown to flag trail sections ahead and explain the design plans to the construction crew from Southwest Conservation Corps (SWCC). The crew completed the beginning phase of the Milk Ranch Trailhead.

Next steps include complete designs for the “Quartz Hill” Trail Project, for construction next Summer.

The Zuni Mountains Trails Project promises to provide a world-class recreational attraction and opportunity for citizens and guests for years to come, connecting the McKinley and Cibola County portions of the Zuni Mountains system.



Carrie flags a section of trail on the Milk Ranch-Hilso trail project.



Eastside Connector from the Milk Ranch Trailhead.

NADO Annual Training Conference Charlotte, NC



Downtown
Charlotte,
North Carolina

In mid-October, Executive Director Jeff Kiely attended the NADO Annual Training Conference in Charlotte, NC. Charlotte had barely avoided the catastrophic floods resulting from Hurricane Florence.

Jeff's participation included an inspiring field trip to Shelby, NC, which showcased its uptown revitalization efforts.



NADO's newly elected Board of Directors sported pink tee-shirts in honor of past Board President Sharon Juon of Iowa, a cancer survivor, and her efforts in support of cancer research & recovery.



Shelby's "City Pavilion" resulted from a public-private partnership that created near-year-round space for the area's Farmers' Market and a variety of community events – a revitalization highlight in the heart of the town.



In a public-private partnership, the old Cleveland County Courthouse was turned into the Earl Scruggs Museum, highlighting the celebrated career of the Shelby fiddler who brought us "Foggy Mountain Breakdown."



Shelby's revitalization included major re-investment in the arts – in this case converting an old theater into a world-class musical performance venue named after country music icon Don Gibson.



In uptown Shelby, an historic four-story building was purchased by a visionary entrepreneur and transformed into a stunning showcase, with a locally owned custom furniture shop on the main floor and beautifully refurbished public spaces on the 2nd and 3rd floors (with a fully functional basement to boot).

Sustaining Connections/New Ideas



Economic investment advisors Fritz Steiger (left) and Joe Lowry (right) flank Arvin Trujillo, who chairs the Steering Committee for the 4 Corners Future Forum.

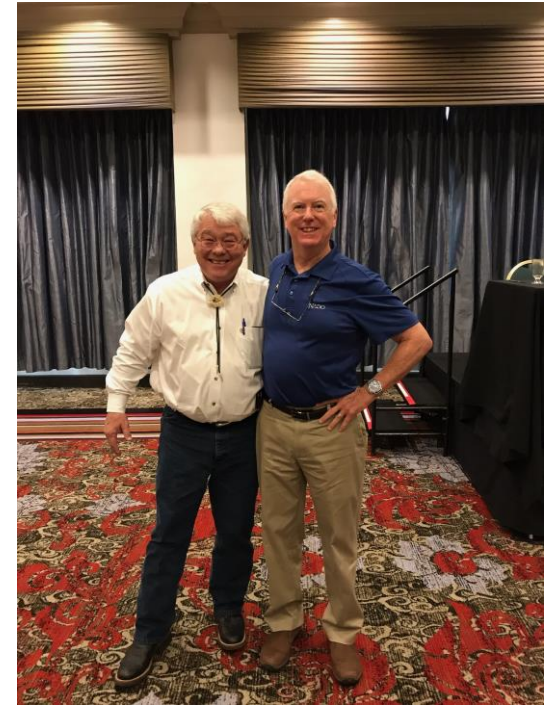
[Like the hats? Regional development can be fun!]

The work of the *Four Corners Future Forum* continued forward, featuring a site visit in late July to the Four Corners region by international developers **Fritz Steiger** of Deltox, Inc. in Arkansas (a close partner with the WalMart Foundation) and **Joe Lowry** of Global Lithium LLC of North Carolina).

APS 4 Corners Power Plant Government Relations Manager **Arvin Trujillo**, last year's recipient of the COG's "Regional Champion" award, has provided major leadership for the public-private collaborative being developed in the Four Corners. Arvin invited long-time friends Fritz and Joe into the area to provide an outsider's view of the region's potential and to offer insights and advice on potential investment strategies going forward.

"Four Corners Future Forum 2.0" was held at San Juan College on November 1, 2018, with over 50 in attendance – following up on the successful "Forum 1.0" held a year ago. Going forward, implementation priorities will include focused work on regional broadband/connectivity and regional branding/marketing, with collaborative efforts also continuing in regional food systems and other development sectors.

*The Gathering Place
for Tulsa*
[artist's rendering]



At the regional conference of the Southwest Region Economic Development Association (SWREDA) held in late July in Tulsa, COG Director Jeff Kiely re-connected with our former Economic Development Program Manager (& former Gallup-McKinley County Chamber Director) **Dave Hinkle** – now heading up a COG in Oklahoma.

On this occasion, Dave introduced Jeff to Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin, who was a keynoter at the conference.

The conference featured major developments in the Tulsa area, including the BOK Center and the 100-acre *Gathering Place for Tulsa*, a master-designed public space focused on children, families, artists and community.

Diversification: The Search for Sustainable Economy in the 4 Corners



Early Fall in the Southern Rockies.

Intensified drought patterns are of concern throughout the West, where future projections of sustainable water supply are increasingly pessimistic.

In mid-September, the COG was invited to present at and participate in the “Coal Communities Forum” sponsored in Delta, Colorado by NADO and the National Association of Counties. At this conference, COG Director Jeff Kiely met with co-presenter Lena Fowler, a member of the Coconino County Board of Supervisors. The Forum revealed broad consensus on the need to diversify our local and regional economies – “from the inside-out.”



At the Forum in Delta, Jeff Kiely met up with Coal Communities Forum co-organizer Justin Fazzari, Economic Development Integrator for the Denver Regional Office of the US Economic Development Administration.

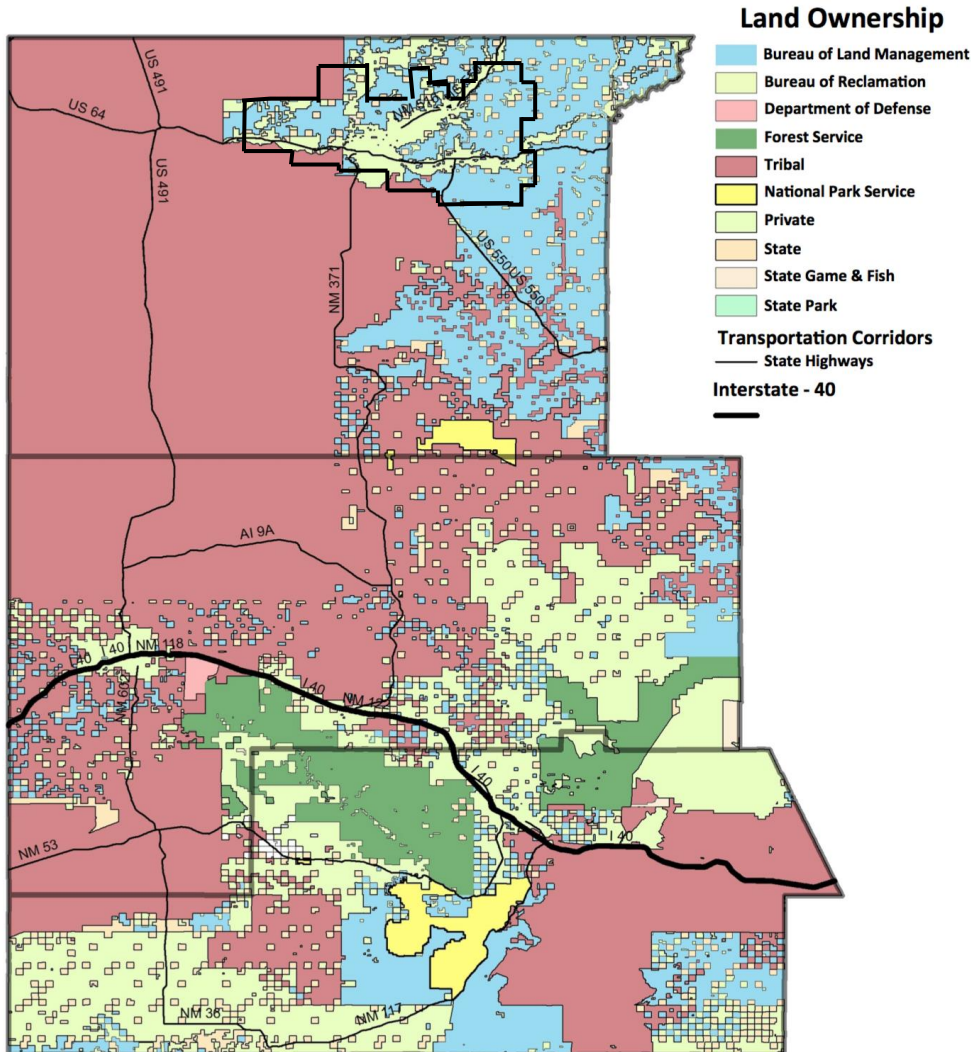
“Economic integration” is a new EDA priority, in which EDA is tasked with assisting regions to tap resources across numerous federal agencies.

The Transportation Challenge:

Planning for Investments in Rural & Small Metro Communities

RTPO

MPO



The COG continued to administer the Northwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization, with monthly meetings of the RTPO Policy/Technical Committee held throughout the region. Quarterly highlights included:

- Technical assistance & support for the *Gallup Transportation Safety Plan*, spearheaded by consultants retained by the NM Department of Transportation;
- Oversight and technical work on the Zuni Mountains Trails Project, including completion of the Milk Ranch-Hilso trail and design work on the Quartz Hill project;
- Attendance at the ESRI Users Conference in San Diego;
- Call for Projects, supported by training sessions and technical assistance with Project Feasibility Form submissions;
- Support for the Four Corners Geotourism Project, including data collection on visit to the website;
- Co-hosting of the NM Transportation Commission meeting, featuring a naming ceremony of the Continental Divide Bridge in honor of former Commissioner, the late Jackson Gibson;
- Attendance at the statewide RTPO Roundtable held in Clovis in late September.

Beginning October 1, the COG began administration of the Farmington Metropolitan Planning Organization (FMPO) under contract with the City of Farmington. The FMPO is led by the Policy Committee, composed of representatives from the local governmental agencies contributing to its operation (the Cities of Aztec, Bloomfield, Farmington and Kirtland; and San Juan County) as well as from the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

With continuous strong support from Farmington staff, Community Development Director Mary Holton, FMPO Administrative Assistant, and Assistant City Manager Julie Baird, COG Director Jeff Kiely assumed the role of Interim FMPO Officer, pending the hiring of a professional planning administrator for that position this Fall.

In addition to getting up to speed with the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the day-to-day work of the MPO and its tasks and timetables, Jeff staffed meetings of the Technical and Policy Committees, and was able to attend the DOT training session on Performance Measures, as well as the Summer and Fall statewide MPO quarterly meetings.

Next steps include the hiring of an MPO officer, following by the hiring of a professional MPO Planner.

The Farmington MPO program represents a significant addition to the COG portfolio, as well as reinforcing the COG presence in San Juan County.

McKinley County “Vision 2020” Comprehensive Plan



The COG is working as primary contractor to McKinley County on its new updated Comprehensive Plan, an important resource that will guide decision-making, policy-making and public investments in community development. There are two phases of public workshops: *Phase I: Local Experts* – focus groups were facilitated during summer 2018 with "local experts" in specific key sectors (see planning elements diagram, below). Input from these sessions was compiled to develop an Executive Summary highlighting main points and themes covered during these workshops.

Vision 2020 Community Meetings

The COG is currently facilitating the second phase of public engagement workshops – *Phase II: Community Meetings*– with local communities. The results of Phase I will be presented to local communities, and further feedback and input from these meetings will be considered in the final compilation and drafting of the Comp Plan. The intent of these outreach meetings is to encourage County residents to be engaged with County leaders in planning for the future well-being of all citizens in the County.

There are four (4) scheduled community meetings to be held during the month of November at various locations throughout the County. This gives all County residents the opportunity to be engaged and involved.

Key topics for focused discussion in these meetings will include:

- Cross-jurisdictional, inter-agency collaboration, cooperation, and support
- Developing efficient strategies for existing resources
- Developing quality jobs, services and programs
- Creating opportunities for our children
- Creating healthier families and communities
- Other challenges and opportunities

An online survey is also being administered to broaden the input from citizens throughout the County.



A flyer for the McKinley County Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update. It features a large red arrow pointing right with the text 'Vision 2020 Community Meetings'. Below the arrow, there is a table listing four community meetings. A 'SAVE THE DATES!!!' sticker is in the top right corner. At the bottom, there is a QR code and a website link.

Meeting Number	Location	Date and Time
1. Crownpoint Middle School	Thursday, November 8, 2018 @ 6:30PM	Address: 1 Eagle Drive, Crownpoint, NM 87007
2. Chee Dodge Elementary School	Tuesday, November 13, 2018 @ 6:30PM	Address: 841 SW 10th Ave, Vail, NM 87722
3. Thoreau Elementary School	Monday, November 26, 2018 @ 6:30PM	Address: 6 Fourth Avenue, Thoreau, NM 87723
4. Vanderwagen Volunteer Fire Dept.	Tuesday, November 27, 2018 @ 6:30PM	Address: West on Seward Road, 10 WY 825, Vanderwagen, NM 87725