

**NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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# Annual Report & Highlights

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*Prepared and Submitted by:*

**NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

**NOVEMBER 2015**

## 2014 - 2015 NWRTPO HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT** Completed all program requirements including annual work program, quarterly reports and invoices, and annual budget.
- ❖ **RTPO REVIEW** The NWRTPO prepared and completed successfully a NMDOT review and audit process.
- ❖ **COLLATERAL MATERIALS** Staff worked periodically throughout the year to update NWRTPO information on several websites, including the collective website for all RTPOs throughout the state, the NWNMCOG website, and the new NWRTPO information portal and calendar.
- ❖ **INFORMATION & TRAINING DISSEMINATION** RTPO members were informed on the many DOT Planning Department initiatives ongoing during this year between the statewide RTPOs, MPOs and NMDOT, including the NMTP update, Freight Plan, Rail Plan, TAP funding roll-out, RTPO Audit, Annual Work Program updates, and LTAP Project Management Training roll-out.
- ❖ **CONFERENCES** The Northwest COG sent the RTPO planner to several conferences throughout the year, including the New Mexico Infrastructure Finance Conference, New Mexico American Planning Association conference, and the Tribal/Local Public Agency Semi-Annual Training. These trainings allow COG staff to synthesize and provide information to member governments.
- ❖ **DATA & TECHNICAL SUPPORT** NMDOT is considering Northwest RTPO to pilot a traffic safety data collection project that would provide more accurate, reliable, and available traffic safety data that would be meet state and federal mandates.
- ❖ **TIGER APPLICATION SUPPORT** Staff provided support letters for TIGER 6 applications on behalf of the Pueblos of Acoma and Laguna, which resulted in an award for over \$1 million for the Pueblo of Laguna Village Trail System.
- ❖ **POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL** Staff participated in collaborating with NMDOT in the update of a Policies and Procedures Manual which includes addressing the roles & relationships between the DOT, MPOs and RTPOs.
- ❖ **MAP-21 INPUT** Staff coordinated with other RTPOs throughout the state and facilitated discussion among member governments to determine best practices moving forward with MAP-21 regulations.
- ❖ **DOT PLANNING SUPPORT** Staff participated with DOT, MPO's and RTPO's statewide in the ongoing development of the NMTP update, Policies & Procedures Manual, Freight Plan, Rail Plan, Functional Classification update, and Annual Work Program updates.
- ❖ **TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVE & RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAMS** NWRTPO was involved in assisting grantees in implement TAP and RTP projects.
- ❖ **PANORAMIC AND GIS SOFTWARE** With NMDOT support, the NWCOG continued to develop its use of Panoramic and ArcGIS software to help benefit member governments in understanding regional work priorities as well as to provide technical mapping assistance as needed.
- ❖ **STATEWIDE PLANS** The RTPO Committee approved and adopted the final plan on October 14, 2015. The Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments Board of Directors also passed a supporting resolution for the plan on August 26, 2015. The final plan is posted on the Northwest New Mexico Council of Government's website, under the RTPO Program site.

## **NWRTPO Northwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization**

In the past year, the RTPO continued its leadership work at the local, regional, state and national levels – pushing for administrative and policy reforms to protect and expand funding investments in rural and small town New Mexico. Our labors have begun to show fruit, even as federal and state budgets have continued to evaporate.

RTPO members include member cities and counties, as well as Native American tribal nations within the region, excluding the metropolitan planning area encompassed by Farmington, Aztec and Bloomfield in San Juan County, which is served by an MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) managed by the City of Farmington.

The Northwest RTPO Committee is chaired by Raymond Concho, Jr. from the Pueblo of Acoma.



**RTPO LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE** Under the new RTPO Bylaws, the governing group is considered a Joint Policy and Technical Committee, with members appointed by the respective RTPO entities. The group’s primary oversight is for the annual preparation of the “Regional Transportation Improvement Plan Recommendations” (RTIPR), as well as review and recommendation of special projects, such as in public transit and transportation alternatives program. Policy issues are referred back to the local entities for review before votes are taken within the RTPO Committee process.

**STATEWIDE COORDINATION** The NWRTPO has coordinated and attended several statewide meetings this year for numerous reasons. In addition to attending the usual roundtable meetings held throughout the state each quarter, staff has also attended several MPO/RTPO coordinating committee meetings for the benefit of informing and gaining consensus on the statewide transportation planning effort. By presenting this information to the public at every opportunity – and acquiring feedback in return – the COG ensures that the priorities of the region will be well reflected in the planning process.

In addition, the COG recently facilitated a meeting regarding local and tribal issues inherent to the changes of the signal and lighting agreements between the DOT and member governments throughout the region. Already, results of this communication are evident in the Pueblo of Acoma. As staff continues to communicate between the New Mexico Transportation Commission and its member governments, the COG demonstrates its unending dedication to provide real value to stakeholders.

The COG/NWRTPO continued consultations and processes for engaging several statewide programs and planning updates, including:

- New Mexico Transportation Plan
- Northwest New Mexico Regional Transportation Plan
- Zuni Mountain Trail Partnership Master Plan
- Freight & Rail Plan
- New Mexico Strategic Safety Highway Plan
- Policy & Procedures Manual and Public Involvement Plan
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), as identified in MAP-21
- Functional Classification plan update, per FHWA guidelines.

## **Northwest New Mexico Regional Transportation Plan**

The development of a long-range transportation plan provides an opportunity for elected officials, organizations, and individual citizens to determine how the transportation system in their area should be structured to better serve future needs effectively and efficiently. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Northwest New Mexico is an integral part of the New Mexico Transportation Plan, a federal requirement for the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT). The purpose of the RTP is to apply the State's vision, goals, objectives and strategies at the regional level. Under federal law, long-range transportation plans must look ahead at least 20 years, although the State of New Mexico chose to look ahead 25 years for its transportation planning. The Northwest New Mexico RTP provides a framework for thinking about the region's transportation system over the period of 2016 to 2040.

The Northwest RTP was developed in coordination with the New Mexico Transportation Plan project team, the Northwest Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO), and NMDOT liaisons. Throughout the planning process, RTPO planners worked to engage the public through a variety of methods including public hearings, public meetings, conferences, and comment periods. The Northwest RTPO participated in a total of 10 events, which included upwards of 250 people.

The plan was developed at the regional level with the establishment of Regional Working Groups (RWG), which helped guide the development of the plan. Our region was composed of 67 RWG members representing a very diverse group of stakeholders. The plan was developed in four major

planning phases: Phase 1, Existing Conditions; Phase 2, Strategic Direction; Phase 3, Resource Allocation; and Phase 4, Implementation. The RWG's met consistently at each phase to provide key input into the plan. They identified regional challenges, opportunities, and developed regional actions. The plan primarily serves to provide a visionary, transparent, predictable, performance-based, and strategic framework to guide decision-making at all levels within the New Mexico Department of Transportation and by New Mexico's RTPO's.

The State of New Mexico provided a template with an articulated vision statement, along with five established goal statements. The Northwest RTP is directly consistent with these five goals and the plan fits within the parameters outlined by the State of New Mexico. Our strategy for each goal was also consistent with the State, but we also included local strategies to address local issues along with actions items assigned to NMDOT, Northwest RTPO, Local and Tribal communities. The State also provided performance measures, which were based on federal guidelines, to help ensure compliance. Our performance measures remained consistent with those provided by the State.

The first draft of the Northwest RTP was posted in early July for a 30-day public review and comments period. All public comments submitted during this period were collected, organized, and presented to the Northwest RTPO Committee on August 12 for review. The RTPO Committee approved and adopted the final plan on October 14, 2015. The Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments Board of Directors also passed a supporting resolution for the plan on August 26, 2015. The final plan is posted on the Northwest New Mexico Council of Government's website, under the RTPO Program site.

## Allison Corridor

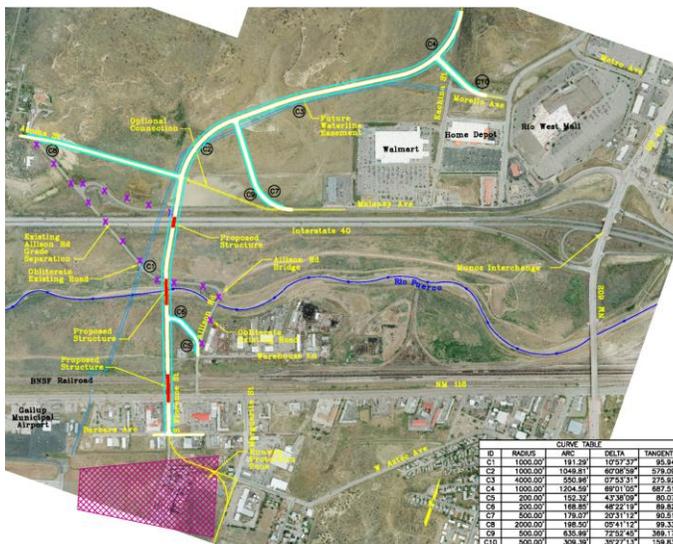
On Tuesday, June 23, 2015 was a long-awaited day for the City of Gallup. On that day, Governor Susana Martinez and her Transportation Secretary Tom Church joined Mayor Jackie McKinney and other local dignitaries, staff and citizens in a groundbreaking ceremony for the Allison Road Bridge replacement project.



In early June, with the support of the Governor, the Allison Bridge Project was allocated \$4.5 million from the capital outlay bill passed during the Special Session of the State Legislature. The funds will be used to replace and realign Allison Road Bridge. The new alignment will straighten the road, while providing continued access to the City/County Warehouse without disturbing their use. Completion of the Bridge will then allow the bigger Allison Road Corridor project to move up the list on the Regional and State Transportation Improvement Program, where it will be eligible for Federal funding. The Corridor project will include several phases:



- 1) Straightening-out Allison Road and making safer and accessible to commercial traffic;
- 2) Tying Allison Road into the road system around Walmart to US 491, not as a byway, but to provide relief on Munoz Overpass and US491 for shoppers and local users;
- 3) A new I-40 exit and frontage road will then be created on both sides of the highway to make land that has been locked from development – open for business.



The Gallup City Council accepted the \$185,719 proposal by Albuquerque engineering firm Bohannon Huston, Inc. (BHI) to update already-existing 2013 engineering plans, specifications, and estimates. The proposal from BHI includes necessities like: advancement of 2013 plans from 90% to 100% “final final” design, bridge rating calculations and coordination with NMDOT, and right-of-way maps.

In the 2013 plans BHI included existing conditions needing to be fixed, such as: the structurally and functionally obsolete design of the Allison Bridge over Rio Puerco; sight distance issues; and congestion within the Munoz Interchange. Funding for the updates will come from a 2013 legislative grant that the project received for \$150,000 and from Public Works/City Engineering’s professional services account.

The purpose of proposed Allison Road Corridor improvements is to mitigate existing geometric, physical, and operational deficiencies; improve safety; and provide system connectivity to the existing NMDOT and City of Gallup transportation network in a manner that is compatible with long range local and regional planning goals to facilitate economic growth.

Once the bridge is complete, this moves the Allison Road Corridor project priority up in the RTIPR and thus the STIP – which makes it like the only project in our region that will receive Federal funding.

## **4CITE Four Corners Intermodal Transloading Equinox**

With construction underway on completing the four-laning of US 491 and the recent funding of \$4.5 million for the Allison Bridge & Road Corridor project, the plans invested in developing efficient networks of multi-modal transportation infrastructure that would support heavy, local, transporting economic opportunities are coming to fruition. Earlier this year, the Northwest New Mexico Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NWRTPO) received funding from the New Mexico Department of Transportation to plan for a "Four Corners Intermodal Transloading Equinox" (4CITE).

The region's strategic location, transportation infrastructure, and energy resources have led to plans for rural transloading outposts along BNSF's transcontinental rail ("transcon") corridor. The Northwest New Mexico region communities is geographically located in equal proximity to the ports in Long Beach and the Global Logistics Hub in Alliance, TX and in Chicago. The 4CITE Initiative is a combination of planned freight-related and rail-related infrastructure, along with industrial developments that interconnect with the Four Corners energy and agricultural clusters and the BNSF TransCon Line.

With the promising potential of viable economic opportunities that 4CITE will bring to our region, there is also a need for a balanced approach to development that will help expand business activities in balance with smart-growth principles. The need to conduct a comprehensive assessment will provide high-quality planning for the purposes of preparing vital infrastructure that will support a first-class multi-modal network serving an emerging economic boom in Northwest New Mexico.

In May, the NWRTPO issued a Request for Proposals from qualified firms regarding the development of a master plan, and consultant selection proceeded. The 4CITE Master Plan will be a multi-site comprehensive approach to coordinate the planning and delivery of projects that would improve access to the Gallup Industrial Park with rail service, the Navajo Inland Port, and transportation infrastructure serving sites throughout our region. The contract was finalized with Wilson & Company, Bohannon Huston, and with Souder, Miller and Associates in October 2015.

Although there are numerous deliverables the NWRTPO would like to achieve in the process, some of the highlighted primary objectives of this project are to:

- Provide an understanding of the 4CITE study area and transportation planning issues in the multi-jurisdictional "checkerboard" lands;
- Assist in the gathering of land use, environmental, population, and socio-economic data as a component for transportation and site development planning;
- Assist with the forecast of future conditions, evaluate impacts of growth, and identify future transportation system improvement needs within the 4CITE study area;

- Analyze current and projected traffic, freight, and rail counts from which to model and build scenarios of land use and transportation system impact. Provide visual models through video, mapping, and other visual mediums;
- Evaluate the existing inland ports and BNSF “rural outposts” and transportation systems with respect to current and future demand and the infrastructure necessary to handle expected future growth. Review public and private agreements regarding the development and maintenance of road and bridge infrastructure within the defined boundaries of these facilities;
- Develop a comprehensive and prioritized assessment of transportation needs in the 4CITE study area, including the BNSF switch yard in Downtown Gallup and subsequent active rail spurs, Gallup Industrial Park with Rail Service, and Navajo Nation Inland Port; and
- Develop and implement a framework for ranking & prioritizing short-, mid-, and long-term projects (e.g., roads, highways, & railways).

Beginning in 2015, the NWRTPO and its members are excited to bring this degree of planning and corridor analysis to the region.

