



# New Mexico Transportation Information Exchange

## **NM TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

October 10, 2002

Vol. 1, Issue 4

Surface Transportation Policy Project - New Mexico

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### ON THE CALENDAR

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October 17-18: New Mexico Highway Commission meeting, Socorro (District 1).  
Information: Santa Fe office, 827-5100.

October 21: New Urbanism and Street Design, Speaker: Peter Swift PE, co-author of a new book that sets up an alternative framework to the AASHTO Green Book.  
Time: 11:45 am-1:15 pm. Location: Ghost Ranch Santa Fe (formerly Plaza Resolana), Santa Fe. Information/Reserve: STPP-NM, 243-8666.

October 26: Forum with US Congressman Earl Blumenauer of Oregon and Tom Udall of New Mexico, on federal policies regarding smart growth, including an update on the re-authorization of the Transportation Equity Act and what's at stake for New

Mexico. Time: 10 am–12 noon. Location: UNM Continuing Education Center, Albuquerque. Information: STPP-NM, 243-8666.

December 5-6: New Mexico Highway Commission meeting, Albuquerque (District 3). Information: Santa Fe office, 827-5100.

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## RECENT PRESS RELEASES

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### GROUPS CRITICIZE REP. YOUNG FOR BILL LIMITING ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS OF HIGHWAY PROJECTS

H.R. 5455, "Expediting Project Delivery to Improve Transportation and the Environment Act," is the environmental streamlining bill introduced in late September by Congressman Young. The legislation threatens NEPA and other environmental and historic preservation statutes, and fails to address the real issues of project delivery shortcomings.

Environmental Defense, Sierra Club, the National Coalition to Defend NEPA, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Scenic America, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Surface Transportation Policy Project have called on House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chair Don Young (R-Alaska) to withdraw H.R. 5455, called EXP\*DITE. The groups urged other members of Congress to oppose the bill.

In a so-called "streamlining" of highway project reviews and permitting by natural resources agencies and historic preservation officials, the bill, in fact, substantively and procedurally curtails public involvement and environmental reviews by limiting time periods and subject matters covered in environmental impact statements and environmental assessments as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The bill makes the Federal Highway Administration the decision-maker for all highway projects, plans and decisions relating to projects, including whether there are alternatives, how detailed studies should be, and the purpose and need (objectives) for the project.

"This bill would seriously undermine public health, endangered species and threatened wetlands by weakening natural resource laws," said Fred Krupp executive director of Environmental Defense. "It makes the transportation objective paramount over natural resource agencies' missions to protect public health and the environment."

"Limiting review to just 30 days prevents scientists from examining projects carefully," said Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope. "Biologists may take just a few days to judge the impacts of a new bike path, but when you're building a 10-lane bridge across a river and constructing off-ramps through a wetlands filled with birds, it's just not that simple. Rep. Young's bill is blind to the complexities facing highway planners, scientists and our communities."

"H.R.5455 is a double barreled blast at historic places. First, substantive protections are eviscerated, and then eviscerated protections are waived in favor of weaker, procedural protections," said Richard Moe, President, National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The bill limits natural resource agencies' reviews to just 30 days on major project decisions like choice of alternatives and objectives of the project. Although the bill claims it does not limit public involvement, it describes an agency-only decision-making process that must operate on an extremely tight schedule.

"This is a bad solution in search of a problem. Actions by the federal government, including the President's Executive Order last week, show effective progress to improve project delivery. This is unneeded, harmful legislation," said David Burwell, executive director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project.

View the text of the bill at <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and search for H.R.5455.

#### NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF AMTRAK CUTBACKS IN NM

A study conducted by the Great American Station Foundation, a Las Vegas, NM based organization dedicated to the revitalization of railway stations across the country, reveals Amtrak's plans to eliminate services to New Mexico communities could have detrimental effects to their economies and revitalization efforts.

The Station Foundation report indicates that not only will Amtrak's cuts result in a loss of jobs and transportation alternatives for people living in areas where the proposed cuts would take place, but rollbacks would also severely impact local tourist industries and plans for station/depot and community revitalization, such as Phase II of the newly constructed Alvarado Transportation Center in Albuquerque. Such effects could result in further-declining economies, as well as putting revitalization efforts temporarily or permanently on hold.

The report was released in June with members of New Mexico's congressional delegation, Albuquerque and Bernalillo county government officials, the Great American Station Foundation, the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), and the Alliance for Transportation Research Institute (ATR).

For a copy of the study, contact Erich Strebe at GASF, in Las Vegas, 426-8055.

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#### NEWS FROM THE NM TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE TEAMS

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##### IS REGIONAL TRANSIT COMING TO NEW MEXICO?

DeAnza Valencia, STPP-NM

New Mexico's overall transportation system is poorly structured to meet the future economic and social needs of our population. With most of the job growth in northern NM occurring in the cities of Santa Fe, Los Alamos, and Espanola, the choice for most people in rural areas is to move to an urban area for a good job or stay within their cultural and family environment without one.

In 1997, the Santa Fe Trails transit system initiated a pilot regional transit project to serve the communities north of Santa Fe. Known to many as the "Park and Ride program," it supplied rides to an average 1,200 passengers per day in its first week and 1,500 passengers within the second week. It removed a daily minimum of 750 cars from the northern highway and local "choke-points." It proved to be effective within the demonstration period of two weeks.

The absence of a regional transit system in north central New Mexico has prompted the convening of the Regional Transportation Taskforce (RT2.) RT2's membership includes elected officials, representatives of northern New Mexico's Pueblos, counties and local governments, the Regional Development Corporation, the Northern Pueblos Regional Planning Organization, the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce, Los Alamos National Labs, and numerous advocacy organizations, including STPP.

The goal of RT2 is to establish a comprehensive, integrated, multi-modal, regional transportation system that serves the people of north central New Mexico. Our current focus is the passage of Regional Transit Authority (RTA) enabling legislation, the elimination of the state funding cap on transit projects, the establishment of a permanent state funding source for transit, and the creation of a legislative interim committee on transportation.

A RTA is a governmental entity specifically created for providing transit services for a defined geographic area. Through state enabling legislation, RTAs are typically granted taxing and bonding authority to provide and manage a regional transit system. A RTA is created through an election by the voters of the proposed RTA service area. RT2 sees the creation of a RTA as important to the region's future in order to increase worker access to jobs, preserve quality of life, increase economic development, maintain good air quality, reduce traffic congestion and provide travel choices.

Along with northern RT2, the Mid-Region Council of Governments, rural transit providers, and transit advocates throughout New Mexico are organizing to promote RTA enabling legislation in the upcoming legislative session. State Representative Dan Silva of Bernalillo county is expected to sponsor the legislation.

RT2 welcomes all interested parties. Monthly meetings are held on the last Friday of the month. For more information please contact DeAnza Valencia, (505) 243-8666.

#### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS TO NEW MEXICO'S MOST ENDANGERED PLACES LIST

The Alliance is soliciting nominations to the Most Endangered Places List for 2003. "The places of history in New Mexico are the most visible and real reflections of our heritage. Not only does their preservation maintain the connection of past to present but they provide lessons for the next generation in what communities value," said Julianne Fletcher, Executive Director of the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance.

Fletcher continued, "The Alliance wants to be a resource for groups who have a vision for saving their endangered places. Besides helping communities spread the word about threatened sites, we see the list as an opportunity for learning about periods in New Mexico's History."

Included on the Alliance's 2002 list were two areas that are historic and cultural landscapes: the 1862 Glorieta Battlefield representing New Mexico's part in the Civil War, and the Hondo Valley in Lincoln County, a cultural landscape shaped by Hispanic farmers and ranchers beginning in the 1850s.

The Alliance anticipates nominations this year will include structures, houses, sites, districts and cultural landscapes. To be eligible for the Endangered List a resource must be 50 years or older, within the state boundaries, historically, culturally, or architecturally significant, and in danger of being lost, destroyed, or substantially altered. Contact the Alliance office at 505-989-7745 for an application form or visit the website at <http://www.nmheritage.org> for more information. Submission deadline is November 11.

#### UNIVERSE BOULEVARD: A TEMPORARY ROAD WITH PERMANENT IMPACT Jessica Saavedra, 1000 Friends of New Mexico

In Albuquerque, the paving of a dirt road called Universe by private developer Sandia Properties has spurred controversy and protest. The two-lane 'temporary' road cuts through undeveloped mesa and Boca Negra Canyon in Petroglyph National Monument and is essentially a quick and inefficient version of the Unser Blvd. Extension, which has not been constructed.

The northern end begins in the Ventana Ranch development, and the new segment runs south through completely open land to connect to Unser Boulevard, directing a disproportionate amount of traffic through neighborhoods. According to the Mid-Region Council of Governments' Traffic Modeler, anticipated traffic six months after the opening of Universe will be 6,000 to 7,000 vehicles per day.

Adjacent neighborhood associations on the west side were not notified prior to the construction of this road and were not given the opportunity to express their concerns about the impacts Universe will have on their neighborhoods. Requirements for public involvement were completely skirted with the excuse that it was mostly funded by private funds. However, the Mid-Region Council of Governments will have to update its Transportation Improvement Program to include Universe, and federal law requires that any update to the transportation program must have public input.

At a special meeting of the Albuquerque City Council, a moratorium on development and infrastructure along Universe was passed, except for existing approved development projects. A proposed resolution by Councilor Hess Yntema for an Environmental Impact Statement is under consideration.

1000 Friends of New Mexico joined several individuals and organizations in filing a complaint in U.S. District Court against the road, asking for a temporary restraining order until public involvement processes and formal approval processes are conducted. The basis for the case was violations of process required by the Federal Clean Air Act. The restraining order was not granted but the plaintiffs are keeping the case open for further action.

Meanwhile, neighborhood associations are asking that the city implement traffic mitigation measures that would limit commuter traffic in the morning through Petroglyph National Park.

#### ALBUQUERQUE RAPID TRANSIT ANALYSIS NEARS COMPLETION

Bruce Rizzieri, City of Albuquerque Transit Dept.

Planning for a rapid transit system for the Albuquerque urban area has been underway since mid-1999. Since that time, the City has made significant progress to make this a reality for the Albuquerque area. The "Middle Rio Grande Connections" study evaluated specific corridors and the feasibility and practicality of the various high capacity transit technologies for the conditions found within Albuquerque. This effort resulted in the recommendation of two types of technologies—light rail and bus rapid transit.

Light rail transit consists of electric rail cars operated on tracks in dedicated rights-of-way, generally in the middle of a street, with specially designed stations at about one mile spacing. It can carry very large volumes of passengers quickly. Bus rapid transit is a relatively new technology that offers premium transit service via buses that can operate in a dedicated guideway (similar to light rail) or as part of mixed flow lanes on City streets.

In recent years, bus rapid transit has proven to be a cost-effective high capacity transit technology and has been implemented in several cities throughout the United States. Both light rail and bus rapid transit require support through a series of stations/park and ride lots and feeder bus routes to collect/distribute riders at the stations.

To qualify for federal funding assistance, transit projects must be developed through the regional transportation planning process and must be evaluated in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In addition, federal regulations require that projects seeking New Starts funding follow a systematic process that includes an Alternatives Analysis. The Alternatives Analysis process for the Albuquerque system is underway and will be completed in late 2002. Preliminary analysis of the high capacity transit system identified by the "Middle Rio Grande Connections" study identified the Central Avenue Corridor as the logical first rapid transit corridor. For more information, contact Bruce at 724-3100 or e-mail [rizzieri@cabq.gov](mailto:rizzieri@cabq.gov) for more information.

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#### NATIONAL NEWS

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#### THREE TEA TIPS: ACTIONS TOWARD THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT

##### 1. JOIN THE ALLIANCE

Has your organization signed on to the Alliance for a New Transportation Charter (ANTC)? Hundreds of organizations, elected officials, and businesses across the

country have already signed on to our statement of principles, and many of those organizations are based here in New Mexico!

As Dave Burwell from STPP notes, "We are organizing ANTC in preparation for reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 2003, but also to aid the process of implementing the law at the state and local level. The reforms of ISTEA have in many cases yet to result in meaningful and lasting changes in how transportation projects are planned, prioritized, and implemented to enhance communities. The "roads-only" lobby will outspend us, but polls consistently show the public favors transportation choice, local control, and agency accountability. ANTC represents the strength of millions of citizens."

After reviewing the Charter, you may sign it online or download it and mail it. Visit <http://www.antc.net>. The website also has links to updates on the TEA legislation debate and to STPP's national newsletter, Transfer.

## 2. STPP BOARD MEMBER HANK DITTMAR TESTIFIES BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE

Hank Dittmar, board member of STPP, testified before the US House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on TEA-21 renewal on September 20. His overview included this excerpt:

"First, TEA-21 is a good law and it should be preserved. You have delivered the tools and structure, challenging the federal, state and local partnership to do its job and implement the law in ways that meet the public's legitimate expectations.

"Second, increased performance and accountability measures should be the hallmark of the renewal legislation. What exists now is not implemented or, worse yet, is simply ignored. After billions of dollars in expenditures, we cannot show the taxpayer and our communities what they are getting for their tax dollars. We must rectify this in the renewal of TEA-21.

"Finally, increased choice and intermodalism, which are central tenets of current law, is where TEA-21 renewal should go. The public is already there."

The full text of the testimony is available at <http://www.tea3.org>.

## 3. NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR BICYCLE FRIENDLY TEA

(If you are a bicycle advocate, you can connect with other two-wheel minded folks!)

"Fill school bike racks, expand trail networks and build safer roads" are the rallying cries of America Bikes, the bike community's campaign for the next federal transportation funding bill. America Bikes is encouraging supporters to register at <http://americabikes.org> to receive updates and action alerts. The campaign is also encouraging cyclists to be involved in the November elections. Responses to a candidate survey are posted at the site.

America Bikes' agenda includes the creation of a national Safe Routes to School program, strengthening Enhancements, CMAQ and other TEA-21 programs and creating a bicycle friendly transportation system that expands trails networks and insures that roads are safe for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The campaign is working closely with local groups across the country and is coordinating with STPP. Major funding for the effort has been provided by Bikes Belong, a bicycle industry coalition.  
From Transfer, August 30, 2002

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## RESOURCES

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### DECODING TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

STPP has produced six documents in the series, "Decoding Transportation Policy & Practice."

The latest is "Transportation Project Delays – Why Environmental "Streamlining Won't Solve the Problem." Problems with transportation project delays will not be solved by diluting widely-supported environmental laws, but those laws are often the target of officials seeking something to blame for schedule delays. "The most effective strategy to speed project delivery is one of the fundamental principles of the very environmental regulations under attack – involving stakeholders early, often and substantively."

To view the series, visit <http://www.transact.org/decoders.htm>

### TRANSPORTATION EQUITY NETWORK

The Transportation Equity Network of The Center for Community Change provides alerts on TANF, Medicaid, and special transportation programs such as Job Access/Reverse Commute. Go to <http://www.transportationequity.org>; "Transportation equity is the fair distribution of public resources across all communities, paying particular attention to the environmental and community development needs of low-income and minority communities."

### INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

The Victoria Transport Policy Institute is an independent research organization dedicated to developing innovative solutions to transportation problems. The VTPI website, <http://www.vtpi.org> has many resources addressing a wide range of transport planning and policy issues.

A recent report, "Economic Value of Walkability," uses standard economic evaluation methods to investigate the value of walking (the activity) and walkability (the quality of walking conditions, including safety, comfort and convenience).

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The NM Transportation Information Exchange is an e-mail newsletter of the Surface Transportation Policy Project's New Mexico office. Submissions are welcome on transportation and community-building topics.

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The Surface Transportation Policy Project is a national coalition working for transportation policies and investments that protect neighborhoods, increase access to goods and services, promote social equity, preserve the environment, strengthen the economy, and improve quality of life. STPP has offices in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Washington DC.