



New Mexico Transportation Information Exchange

NM TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION EXCHANGE

December 20, 2002

Vol. 1, Issue 5

Surface Transportation Policy Project - New Mexico

Happy Holidays! This issue is focused on the recent meeting of the NM Transportation Initiative and STPP's 2003 campaign for state and federal transportation legislation.

FEATURES:

ON THE CALENDAR

NEWS FROM THE NM TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

PRESS RELEASES

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ON THE CALENDAR

January 21, 2003: New Mexico State Legislature convenes.

January 24-25: New Mexico Transportation Commission meeting, Santa Fe (District 5). Information: Santa Fe, 827-5100.

February 9-11, 2003: New Mexico Passenger Transit Alliance Conference.
Information: Jack Valencia, Director, (505) 526-7770.

March 21, 2003: New Mexico State Legislature adjourns.

Watch for more items in the next newsletter, in January! Submissions are welcome.

NEWS FROM THE NM TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

JOIN THE LEGISLATIVE ACTION CAMPAIGN NOW!

It was an exciting day on December 13th as 59 advocates, elected officials, transit program directors and staff from NMSHTD and other government agencies arrived for the Second Annual Meeting of the New Mexico Transportation Initiative and the beginning of the State Legislative Action Campaign.

Many of our partners in the initiative could not attend the meeting, but we encourage you to sign up for the State Legislative Action Campaign. During the next few weeks, while the State Legislature prepares and goes into session, you will receive updates on

transportation bills and recommended actions. We hope you will share the information you receive with your organizations' members and its constituents or clients.

So, if you haven't done it yet, join the campaign by filling out the form at the end of this newsletter (also attached as a Word document). Please e-mail to jomcen@spinn.net, or fax to (505) 248-1361 (Albuquerque). Please join this month so that you can be 'activated' soon! You'll receive our meeting packet, which is full of contact information, fact sheets on Regional Transit District Enabling Legislation and Safe Routes to School Legislation, and a useful advocates tip sheet.

SECOND ANNUAL MEETING REPORT Joanne McEntire and DeAnza Valencia

The US Congress prepares to reauthorize the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Hank Dittmar, a national expert on transportation policy and the President of the Great American Station Foundation, gave a summary of STPP's national efforts aimed at the upcoming transportation spending bill. Dittmar discussed the political and financial climate surrounding transportation reform efforts in New Mexico, including burdensome debt service requirements for highway construction and a new transit and rail-friendly Governor-elect. Dittmar also discussed his project, "Reconnecting America," that seeks to have a national integrated intermodal approach to intercity travel. (See PRESS RELEASES.)

WHAT YOU CAN DO: STPP launched a campaign last year to develop the Alliance for a New Transportation Charter (ANTC) to begin the TEA-3 reauthorization campaign, which has been signed by over 500 organizations nationally. Welcome to the newest signatory, the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce! Sign up today. More information on how to sign the Charter and how you can get involved in the national campaign can be found at: <http://www.antic.net/>

During the meeting, participants prepared for the upcoming New Mexico State Legislative Session with New Mexico House Transportation Committee Chairman, State Representative Dan Silva (D-Bernalillo), and Senator Dede Feldman (D-Albuquerque). Despite the state's budget crunch, Governor-elect Bill Richardson will hopefully work with the legislature and pass key bills, described below.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: One of the key actions to accomplish this month or very early in the new year is to call and talk to your state legislators while they are at home. The next 25 days is an excellent time to tell them about important state transportation legislation and ask for their support!

Members of non-governmental organizations can join the online group of the STPP led Initiative, at <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NMTransInit/>> (copy and past this address in your internet server's address line). The online group allows you to send messages directly from your e-mail program, and when you visit the site, find useful documents regarding transportation legislation. Members can post items on the calendar, documents and photos that can be utilized by others.

KEY STATE LEGISLATION: BILLS TO WATCH!

Safe Routes To Schools Legislation

The Safe Routes to Schools legislation would direct New Mexico's Highway and Transportation Department to use transportation funds to make it easier for children to bike and walk to school. States receive Transportation Safety Set-aside funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and they have a great deal of discretion on how to spend those funds. A portion of these funds can be utilized for a statewide Safe Routes to Schools program. Engineering improvements—sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signals—are the most costly of the programmatic activities in a Safe Routes program, and safety set-aside funds are needed for these improvements.

Regional Transit District Enabling Legislation

As New Mexico grows, our economies become more regional than local. Yet, most existing transit systems do not cross jurisdictional boundaries and are not adequately funded. Regional Transit Districts (RTDs) would solve that problem by allowing public transit systems to serve multiple communities.

Existing New Mexico law does not support long-term cooperation between local governments on public transit projects, and currently does not permit Regional Transit Districts. The proposed legislation would enable the creation of RTDs across New Mexico. Local governments could decide whether to participate in an RTD, and each local government would submit to its voters any request for a transit tax.

NM TRANSPORTATION ADVOCATES AGENDA: STATEMENTS

During the second annual meeting, advocates and transit staff joined in an open discussion on issues to watch for, and the next steps for the initiative. Statements from participants follow, organized by federal, state and local topics.

Federal

- The website, www.fta.gov is a great site for information on the Federal Transit Administration's programs that support transit systems.
- The TEA reauthorization should include measures that call upon states to be accountable for their spending of federal funds, and to provide access for the public to obtain information about state spending of TEA funds. (After all, it's our money!)

State

- There should be a memorial to establish a standing legislative interim committee on transportation. Advocates should lobby the Speaker of the House for a memorial.
- The new Secretary of NMSHTD, Rhonda Faught, will be attending the State Transportation Commission meetings (new name!), which are held in each district around the state. Plan to attend a commission meeting and provide testimony on your local issues and statewide concerns. (This is also a great time to meet Secretary Faught in Santa Fe. NMSHTD: 827-5100, PO Box 1149, Santa Fe, NM, 87504-1149.) Visit the NMSHTD website at <http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/>.
- Visit Governor Bill Richardson after the legislative session, in the spring, to request his action on identified executive orders. Ideas for executive action are welcome!
- We need to plan on a statewide level, such as a statewide strategic plan.
- Are you looking for Traffic Counts? State highway data is available from Alvaro Vigil at NMSHTD.

- The state fund for highways and transportation is broke! It needs attention, first with a policy of "Fix it First." That would guide NMSTHD to invest in existing infrastructure first, before spending on new roads and pavement. This will also be a key part of the STPP's platform for the reauthorization of TEA-21. Many states have overspent their budget, borrowing from anticipated future federal funds to pay for projects. New Mexico is \$1.3 billion in debt, spending a huge portion of the funds from TEA-21 and future TEA money. More information on New Mexico's debt is forthcoming from the STPP-NM office.
- Land use and transportation should be much more connected than it has been, regionally and around the state.

Local

- Portions of the Turquoise Trail, a State and National Scenic Byway, is gradually being replaced by a NM State "maintenance" highway. The turnout at the San Pedro Overlook subdivision was recently overbuilt. Context sensitive design is needed on the whole length of the trail as segmented projects steadily change the experience of this highway.
<<http://www.raintreecounty.com/SaveLost.html>> hosts photos and the latest report.
- The City of Albuquerque Transit Department is leading a Transit Study that includes consideration of local and regional transportation systems. A Rapid Transit study for Central Avenue and six other corridors is underway now, with light rail as the preferred mode. Connect with the Transit Study through Bruce Rizzieri at 724-3177.
- Safer New Mexico Now and the NM SafeKids coalition support safety activities for children under 14 years old, and the program now has seven local chapters. Is there one in your community? Check in with Coordinator Jamie Michael, in Albuquerque at 856-6119. Also, many printed materials on safety strategies are available at the Injury Prevention Center in Santa Fe.
- The transit system in Los Alamos, the Roadrunner, still runs every day, while the population continues to increase, notes Mike Bartholomew, Director.
- Los Alamos County is preparing a Bicycle Master Plan, announced Diane Albert of the Los Alamos County Cyclists Coalition.

PRESS RELEASES

SANTA FE AND HOBBS AIRPORTS RANK AT THE TOP OF AIRPORTS WHERE AIR TRAVEL SERVICE HAS BEEN CUT

Air travel service nationwide has declined since 9/11 with many airports experiencing a decrease in the double digits, according to a new report. The impact has been most severe on America's small and medium airports. In New Mexico, the Santa Fe and Hobbs (Lea County) Airports have lost more than half of their flights over the past year. Twenty-one airports, including New Mexico's Ruidoso Airport, have ended all scheduled service.

The report concludes that 9/11 exposed the fault lines in an already faltering industry and that air travel will be unable to play its traditional role in the national transportation portfolio. The report calls for integrating air, rail and bus to provide travelers with more choices.

"The reduction in flights means travelers are being forced to take connecting flights instead of direct routes and have fewer flights to choose from when booking their trips," said Hank Dittmar, of Las Vegas, NM and co-director of Reconnecting America, the organization releasing the report. "These service cuts represent a fundamental restructuring of the air travel network, not a temporary adjustment."

The report analyzes the loss in scheduled flights at over 500 airports across the United States. The report is an analysis of nearly 400,000 flights described in the Official Airline Guide in examining comparable weeks during the fall of 2001 and 2002.

Some of the most dramatic reductions in flight schedules have been seen at non-hub commercial airports. These airports are typically served by a few flights each day to one or two destinations. Santa Fe had the fourth highest reduction in the nation at 62% and the Hobbs (Lea County) Airport tied for the 6th highest rate with a 61% reduction in flights. The average cut in flight frequency for non-hub commercial service was 7.7%.

Farmington, Carlsbad, Roswell and Taos Airports all saw substantial flight losses above the national average. The Albuquerque Airport, New Mexico's largest airport, saw an 8.92% reduction in service. The Ruidoso Airport has lost all of its scheduled air service.

The reduction in air service reflects the financial reality of the nation's big airlines. Pressure from low cost carriers has forced fares down even as airport charges and security costs are rising, making short and medium distance flights unprofitable. The report identifies a way out of this dilemma, noting that there are several markets where bus and rail provide an alternative.

Even the airline trade group, the Air Transport Association (ATA), recognizes that this trend has reduced access to smaller and medium communities. In November 2002 ATA's President Carol Hallet warned, "As the industry continues to contract, smaller and mid-size communities will be disconnected from the national air transportation system – a system vital to their economic health."

Reconnecting America is calling for changes in government policy that would permit a closer integration of air with rail and bus and thereby creating a more financially stable transportation network, which will enable each transportation mode to serve the markets it's best suited for. The campaign is calling for an overhaul of the nation's transportation system when Congress reauthorizes funding for air, rail and highways next year.

"Investing in a more diversified and integrated national transportation system is far better than the next most likely action by Congress: providing the major airlines and Amtrak with another bailout, which merely allows them to continue with the failed business models of the last century," added Dittmar.

Full Report Available at: <<http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/>>

RESOURCES

DESIGNING ROADS WITH COMMUNITIES: CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN FOR HIGHWAYS

Just released! A white paper from STPP-NM and the Cultural Landscapes/Flexible Highway Standards Team of the NM Transportation Initiative describes Context Sensitive Design (CSD), how two state DOTs have institutionalized it in their highway projects, and approaches to establish CSD in New Mexico's Highway and Transportation Department. Contact DeAnza Valencia at dvalencia@transact.org to get a paper copy. (The paper will soon be available to download from the internet.)

THREE KEY TEA WEBSITES

STPP hosts three great websites that support coalition partners in the TEA reauthorization effort:

1. If you are a policy leader or elected official, the best information on the reauthorization, including latest testimony, speeches and policy platforms is at www.tea3.org.
2. If you are a transportation professional or educator, this site contains excellent policy research in reports, analyses and newsletters: www.transact.org.
3. If you are a grassroots advocate or coalition partner, find invitations to training sessions, fact sheets and educational materials: www.antc.net.

BUY YOUR 2003 STPP CALENDAR NOW!

Transportation reform will be high on everyone's agenda in 2003, and STPP's beautiful new wall calendar will help you keep track of the days and weeks while reminding you of conferences and annual meetings, important dates in transportation history, and dates for TEA-21's reauthorization agenda in Congress. This 30-page calendar is full of stunning photos featuring innovative transportation and community development projects from across the country, including Isleta Blvd. in Albuquerque! To securely purchase the calendar online, visit <http://www.transact.org/calendar.asp>.

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.

To subscribe, send your name, address, e-mail and affiliation to dvalencia@transact.org. To unsubscribe, send a reply to this e-mail newsletter with "Unsubscribe" in the body of the message.

Editor: Joanne McEntire, jomcen@spinn.net.
STPP-NM Director: DeAnza Valencia, dvalencia@transact.org

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.

**NM TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE
LEGISLATIVE ACTION CAMPAIGN!**

SIGN-UP SHEET

**How do you want to be involved during the 2003 Federal and State
Transportation Action Campaign?**

- Educating and mobilizing your group's members and friends on transportation initiatives
- Communicating with the public (presentations to other local groups, letters to the editor in newspapers)
- Communicating with elected officials at the state and federal level (phone calls, letters, meetings)
- Communicating with city and county elected officials about the legislation (meetings, letters, calls)
- Communicating with the media (interviews, briefings)
- Attending STPP sponsored press conferences (Most likely in Santa Fe during legislative session)
- Participating and testifying in legislative hearings (You will be contacted when a hearing is scheduled.)

Check here if we can list you and/or your organization as a supporter of:

- Safe Routes to Schools Legislation
- New Mexico RTD Enabling Legislation
- Eliminate the State Funding Cap for Mass Transit Legislation

NAME: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

E-MAIL: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

ADDRESS: _____

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CONTACT YOU FOR QUICK RESPONSE ACTION? _____

DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE E-MAIL UPDATES? (THE NM TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION EXCHANGE
AND SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATES CAN ALSO BE FAXED.)

YES _____ NO _____ I RECEIVE IT NOW _____

DO YOU WANT TO BE ON A PHONE TREE? (FOR PEOPLE WHO DO NOT HAVE E-MAIL OR DON'T USE IT ON
A FREQUENT BASIS) YES _____ NO _____