



New Mexico Transportation Information Exchange

NM TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION EXCHANGE

February 16, 2003

Vol. 2, Issue 2

Surface Transportation Policy Project - New Mexico

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NM LEGISLATIVE ALERT

HB 102 / SB 34: ENABLING REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICTS

Senate Bill 34 is slated for a Senate Floor Vote this Monday Feb. 17th!

SB 34 was amended and passed by the Senate Finance Committee. In the House, HB 102 has passed in two committees, and will be heard next in the House Appropriations and Finance Committee.

Sponsored by State Representative Dan Silva (D-Albuquerque) and Senator Ben Altamirano (D-Silver City), the RTD bill would provide a framework for local governments to cooperate on regional transit projects.

What you can do:

Call your Senator to request their VOTE FOR the bill on Monday morning. It is first on the agenda. The main phone number at the Legislature is (505) 986-4300.

HOUSE BILL 534 / SENATE BILL 561: TRANSIT CAP

Sponsored by Rep. Luciano "Lucky" Varela (D-Santa Fe) and Senator Dede Feldman (D-Albuquerque), the bill will remove the expenditure cap on funds used by NMSHTD for "Public Mass Transportation." **The Senate Public Affairs Committee has scheduled the bill for Sunday Feb. 16, 3:00 pm, Room 321. The House Transportation Committee will consider the bill on Tuesday, Feb. 18, 8:30 am, Room 315.**

What you can do:

Contact your legislator if they are on the House Transportation Committee and request their support of the bill. To send a written statement by Fax, send it via (505) 986-4610.

House Transportation Committee

Legislator, Party / County, District # / Phone

Daniel P. Silva, Chair, Dem / Bernalillo, 13 / 986-4425
Patricia A. Lundstrom, Vice-chair, Dem / McKinley, San Juan, 9 / 986-4435
Donald E. Bratton, Rep / Lea, 62 / 986-4451
Jose A. Campos, Dem / Curry, DeBaca, Guadalupe, Roosevelt, 63 / 986-4234
Anna M. Crook, Rep / Curry, 64 / 986-4454
Ron Godbey, Rep / Bernalillo, 22 / 986-4453
Jane E. Powdrell-Culbert, Rep / Sandoval, 44 / 986-4467
Earlene Roberts, Rep / Chavez, Lea, Eddy, Roosevelt, 63 / 986-4215
Debbie A. Rodella, Dem / Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Taos, 41 / 986-4258
Henry "Kiki" Saavedra, Dem / Bernalillo, Valencia, 10 / 986-4316
James G. Taylor, Dem / Bernalillo, 12 / 986-4774
Donald L. Whitaker / Lea, 61 / 986-4420

Thanks! To supporters of the RTD bill and the Transit Cap Elimination bill who recently signed onto the Supporter Lists:

Southwest Council of Governments
NM Passenger Transportation Association
Grant County Interagency Alliance
Z-Tran (Alamogordo Transit)
South Central Council of Governments
Grant County Community Health Council
Silver City-Grant County Prospectors

HB 729 / SB 556: SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS PROGRAM SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 55 / HOUSE MEMORIAL 16

Sponsored by Senator Linda Lopez (D-Albuquerque) and Rep. Richard Vigil (D-San Miguel, Torrance), the bill sets up the Safe Routes to Schools program and makes an appropriation of \$750,000 to establish the Safe Routes to Schools program fund.

The first committees to hear the bill will be the Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee and the House Education Committee. This is an excellent opportunity to work with Representatives involved on the Education Committee and encourage their understanding of Safe Routes to Schools!

The Memorial, "Safer Pedestrian and Bicycle Traffic," advises NMSHTD that the department should direct its efforts and Federal funding on "improving bicycle and pedestrian access and on traffic-calming projects in school zones." The House Transportation Committee will consider HM 16 and Senate Rules Committee will consider SJM 55.

Thanks! To Donna Detweiler of the NM Conference of Churches' Sustainable Futures Task Force, who recently signed onto the Supporter list.

SB 640: NM PASSENGER RAIL STUDY

Sponsored by Senator Bernadette M. Sanchez (D-Albuquerque) the bill provides funding for a feasibility study regarding the potential for passenger rail service linking the El Paso-Juarez metropolitan area with New Mexico towns and cities along the Rio Grande corridor and continuing on to Denver, Colorado. The study would also investigate the potential for additional New Mexico passenger rail service and links to the national intermodal transportation initiative, "Reconnecting America".

Senator Sanchez is the Vice-Chair of the Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee. The bill will first be heard in the Senate Education Committee and then the Senate Finance Committee.

Other Bills to Watch

MILE-BASED AUTO INSURANCE COVERAGE

HB 532, sponsored by Representative Dan Silva
Committees: HTC/HBIC/HJC

The Pay As You Drive (PAYD) auto insurance bill is based on the bill that was passed in Texas two years ago. It provides for optional auto insurance prices based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT), thus favoring owners of cars that are not driven as much.

REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT GROSS RECEIPTS TAX ACT

SB 420, sponsored by Senator Linda Lopez
Committees: SCORC/SFC-SCORC

CREATE STATE TRANSIT FUND

HB 690, sponsored by Representative Dan Silva
Committees: HTC/HTRC/HAFC-HTC

HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT ACT

HB 4, sponsored by Representative Dan Silva
Committees: HTC/HAFC-HTC

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department is considering a name change to the New Mexico Department of Transportation. Stay tuned for more information!

You can locate and download a bill that has been introduced and determine its status in committee, on the New Mexico legislature home page (updated on a nightly basis):

<http://www.legis.state.nm.us/>

For more information from STPP and other advocates on these legislative proposals, join our online group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NMTransInit/>. Fact Sheets, lists of supporters for the bills, and other information are posted, and members are welcome to submit items. Membership is open to staff and members of non-governmental organizations. Subscribe by e-mailing a note to: NMTransInit-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

ON THE CALENDAR

February 27-28: Consider the Catapult... Implementing Solutions for Crossing Uptown Streets. This will be an intensive work session with pedestrian expert Dan Burden, focusing on the Uptown area in Albuquerque. Contact: Jonathan LaValley, jlavalley@salud.unm.edu, 272-8670.

March 7-8: RE Use It! Workshop, in Albuquerque. The event will highlight development opportunities along the railroad corridor. Re-using obsolete and historic industrial/commercial buildings, communities can draw new investment, foster neighborhood revitalization and bring growth downtown. Contact: Bay Stevens, Cultural Asset Development, bay.stevens@att.net, 281-5179.

March 20: State Bicycle/Pedestrian/Equestrian Committee meeting, in Las Vegas, NM. Contact: Gail Ryba, gnryba@cybermesa.com.

March 20-21: New Mexico Transportation Commission meeting, Las Cruces. Information: Santa Fe office, 827-5100. Note: District 5 (Farmington) and 6 (Gallup) commissioners' terms expired January 1.

NEWS FROM THE NM TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

BIKE/WALK/BUS DAY AT THE ROUNDHOUSE DeAnza Valencia

Thank you very much to all of the advocates that came to the Capitol in support of the Safe Routes to Schools legislation. We had a very successful news conference and rally. This is due to the hard work and dedication of so many of you! In particular, STPP would like to thank Senator Linda Lopez, Representative Jeannette O. Wallace, the Bicycle Coalition of New Mexico, the Santa Fe Cyclists, (including the wee ones!) New Mexico Coalition for a Livable Future, New Mexico Conference of Churches, Judy Espinosa, Hank Dittmar, Gail Ryba, Mary Finney, Connie Espinosa, Isaura Andaluz, and Joanne McEntire.

NEW MEXICO HERITAGE LEADER IS NAMED STATE OFFICIAL from the NM Heritage Preservation Alliance

Katherine "Kak" Slick, a Las Vegas preservationist and 20-year veteran of community revitalization and development in New Mexico, has been named director of the State Historic Preservation Division by Rubén Smith, head of the New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs.

The Historic Preservation Division is charged with identifying, preserving and encouraging the restoration and reuse of New Mexico's archaeological and historical resources. The agency employs 25 people with an annual budget of approximately \$1 million.

Slick is a board member and past president of the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance, where she initiated the first Endangered List for New Mexico that included the New Mexico Night Sky. Her assistance with lobbying efforts in the New Mexico Legislature led to the landmark New Mexico Night Sky Protection Act.

PEDESTRIAN VIEWS

ATLANTA'S 'AUTO RECOVERY ZONES' A PERILOUS PLACE TO WALK
from Governing.com's Otis White's Notebook

Jan. 30, 2003

What are sidewalks for? If you think they are for pedestrians to walk safely, then welcome to Atlanta, where the state Department of Transportation considers them to be "auto recovery zones." As the DOT sees it, the sidewalk is a buffer, so if a driver veers off the road while talking on his cell phone, he has a chance to yank the car back on the road.

This startling piece of information came out when a developer tried to get the DOT's permission to plant trees between his development's sidewalks and the street, to give the walkways a shaded appearance. Absolutely not, the DOT said. If a car hit a tree, one official said, it would surely hurt the car. But if a car roars up on a sidewalk, there's a chance it won't hit any pedestrians. "It's kind of like asking the question, which is the lesser of two evils? We want to protect the pedestrian, but we want to protect the drivers as well," the official said.

Pedestrian advocates are amazed. "[The DOT] would rather have a pedestrian killed by a car than have a car fender dented," said one.

Footnote: Atlanta is routinely ranked as one of the most dangerous cities in the country for pedestrians. In 2001, 64 pedestrians were killed there. Some of them, apparently, were walking on auto recovery zones.

THE \$300 BILLION DOLLAR QUESTION
NEW STPP REPORT RATES STATES ON SPENDING PRIORITIES
from STPP's "Transfer"
February 5, 2003

A new report issued by STPP last week finds that federal transportation funding made available under ISTEA and TEA-21 has helped repair the nation's roads and bridges and sparked progress in curbing transportation-related air pollution. STPP's analysis credits the targeted funding made available through ISTEA & TEA-21 for much of the improvements, particularly the Interstate Maintenance, Bridge repair, and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) improvement programs.

The STPP report also found that despite gains made in many states, there could have been greater improvement had Congress closed accounting loopholes in the current TEA-21 law that now allow states to shift funds out of road and bridge repair, traffic safety and clean air accounts. In the ten period of FY'92 - FY'01, states neglected to spend a combined \$7.9 billion in road and bridge repair funds, \$2.2 billion in clean air money and \$1 billion in traffic safety funding in favor of other priorities. The report details five recommendations to help spend existing transportation funds more effectively and build more accountability into transportation finance.

Note: You can find New Mexico's data in the report at <http://www.transact.org/library/300B.asp>

TEA RE-AUTHORIZATION UPDATE:
ADMINISTRATION OPPOSES GAS TAX HIKE; FY04 BUDGET BODES ILL FOR TRANSIT
from the American Planning Association's biweekly "From Washington"
February 4, 2003

Desperately seeking enough revenue to boost transportation spending in the reauthorization of TEA-21, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Don Young (R-AK) proposed a hike in the gas tax. Young floated the idea of a 2 cent gas tax increase along with other revenue enhancing ideas, including indexing the gas tax to inflation and changing the tax break for

ethanol.

The gas tax proposal received a decidedly cool reception from the Bush Administration and Young's counterpart in the Senate, Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK). A Statement of Administration Policy on the Senate's FY03 spending package said the White House was "strongly opposed" to increasing the federal gas tax.

A specific legislative proposal on reauthorization has not yet emerged from the Bush Administration. The Department of Transportation originally suggested that a blueprint for reauthorization would be released early in 2003, but that timetable has since been revised with officials now suggesting that the Administration's plan would not be sent to Capitol Hill until late March or early April.

The debate over the president's budget proposal may well set the tone for some important reauthorization debates. Transit supporters were not encouraged by some significant changes proposed by the Administration in its recent budget. In particular, the Administration's plan to increase the state and local share of transit projects under the New Starts program, keep overall transit spending flat while increasing the amount for highways, and cut CMAQ funding has raised great concern among transit advocates about the likelihood of increasing transit spending and maintaining the current highways to transit spending ratio in reauthorization.

RESOURCES

THE HUB

The Santa Fe Community Bike Project is a community bike shop that is free and accessible to all. Bike donations are wanted, whole or in parts, and are tax deductible. The shop offers a lending library of bicycles, provides access to tools and space for working on bicycles, and is a center of activity. Phone: 820-0566. Address: Warehouse 21, 1614 Paseo de Peralta.

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. Please send material to Joanne McEntire, Editor: jomcen@spinn.net; or mail: STPP-NM, 1001 Marquette Ave., Albuquerque, 87102; or Fax: (505) 248-1361.

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.

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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.