



New Mexico Transportation Information Exchange

NM TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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Surface Transportation Policy Project - New Mexico

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ON THE CALENDAR

July 19-20 –New Mexico Coalition for a Livable Future Quarterly Meeting, Los Alamos, NM
(By invitation only)

October 2 - International Walk a Child to School Day

RECENT PRESS RELEASES

ALBUQUERQUE RANKS 29th IN CONGESTION- THAT'S NOT NEWS

TTI Report Loses Sponsor Over Failure to Help Solve Congestion

June 20, 2002

Today the Texas Transportation Institute announced that congestion in Albuquerque is the 29th worst in the country. But the report's validity is coming into question as transportation officials look for more sophisticated ways to measure and address congestion.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project has long criticized the report's narrow focus, and is calling for better performance measures. Now a longtime funder of the report, the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), has pulled their sponsorship due to its failure to accurately measure highway performance. The TTI report's use of mathematical models, and its narrow focus, means it doesn't take into account the impact of better congestion management practices, trips made on transit, and sprawling development that keeps people dependent on cars.

"Albuquerque's ranking may change, but our traffic problems remain constant," said Hank Dittmar, a New Mexico resident and board member of STPP. "We need more

sophisticated data that help us address some of the underlying problems that cause congestion, such as a lack of transportation choices and sprawling development."

Although more than \$30 billion in federal money is invested in our highway system each year, there is no official measure of how these investments perform. The lack of data reflects a general lack of accountability in the transportation system, and should be addressed when the federal transportation law is reauthorized next year (TEA-21).

"This report has been used for years by the highway lobby to whip up support for more road-building," said David Burwell, President of STPP. "But it doesn't tell us how the transportation system is helping people get where they need to go – it just measures mobility for people in cars. We spend a lot of the public's money on transportation. We owe it to the taxpayer to get it right." STPP is a national coalition of groups dedicated to making the transportation system work better for people.

Other recently released transportation data point toward the true causes of congestion. New Census data for Albuquerque show that more people are living in places where options are less likely to be available. The percentage of people carpooling to work in New Mexico (14.8%) is much higher than the level for the rest of the US (12.2%). This suggests that for people who do not drive alone to work, the choices are very limited. The percentage of "drive-alone" commuters in New Mexico is 75.8%.

According to the Census data only 0.8% of people in NM used public transit to get to work, compared to 4.7% nationwide. Compared to other mid-sized cities in the southwest, Albuquerque has a much lower rate of transit commuting - a 1.3% rate. For example, the city of Tucson has a 2.5% transit share. It also has a lower (less congested) TTI number ranking (ranks 40th compared to Albuquerque's 29th). El Paso's transit mode share is 2.2% and it also has a much lower congestion ranking (49th.)

The TTI report fails to count transit trips and has no way to look at the impact of land use.

"How many years do we need to hear the same thing before we admit that building more roads doesn't work? We can't build our way out of congestion," says DeAnza Valencia of STPP's New Mexico office. "The reason more cars are jammed in traffic is our land use patterns force us to drive everywhere and there are so few transportation choices. The real answer to traffic congestion is to give people more choices so they don't have to drive to get everything done."

For more information, a copy of the WSDOT memo, STPP's statement, and links to other fact sheets and reports about induced travel and congestion relief, contact DeAnza Valencia at (505) 243-8666. Information is also available at www.transact.org.

NEW MEXICO COALITION FOR A LIVABLE FUTURE RELEASES POLL

Recent Poll Shows New Mexico Voters Want Richardson and Sanchez to Prioritize Water Issues

June 18, 2002

According to a recent statewide poll of registered voters, New Mexicans view water shortage and drought as the biggest problems facing New Mexico today. Four out of five voters agree that a statewide water plan along with a greater emphasis on water and land use planning should be the highest priorities for the next governor.

"We are calling on Bill Richardson and John Sanchez to respond to this Voter's Agenda. As New Mexico continues to grow we need to deal with the fact that there are limited water supplies that are being impacted by a severe drought. It is not surprising that New Mexicans are concerned with water availability and the need for future water and land use planning. We hope to work with our gubernatorial candidates on these important issues," said Janice Varela, Chair of the New Mexico Coalition for a Livable Future.

When asked to respond to an open-ended question on the biggest problem facing New Mexico, voters were overwhelmingly concerned with the lack of water (33%). These responses were followed by concern over the poor quality of the education system (20%), a high crime rate (10%) and the non-availability of good jobs (9%).

The poll conducted by Research and Polling Inc. showed that the majority of voters would be more likely to support a gubernatorial candidate who promotes development of vacant land within cities (59%) as opposed to a candidate that promotes development on the outskirts of cities and towns (24%).

Over three-quarters (78%) of the voters polled agreed that the prioritization of state funding for maintaining schools and roads in existing communities should be a high priority for the next governor. The poll also showed that seven in ten voters would support a candidate who prioritizes the maintenance and repair of existing roads and highways as opposed to a candidate who favors building new state roads and highways.

"Richardson and Sanchez can't ignore what the voters are saying about how we should spend our tax dollars on roads. It is very clear from this poll that voters want to fix the roads first in our existing communities before considering new ones. We hope the next governor will insist on a "Fix It First" policy," said DeAnza Valencia, NM Director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project.

The poll also showed strong support for policies that emphasize the preservation of open space and farmland (62%) and increased availability of affordable housing (55%).

The NM Coalition for a Livable Future - a coalition of over 57 statewide organizations and businesses concerned about quality of life issues has prepared a Policy Guide for the 2002 Gubernatorial Election that outlines policy actions for the next governor. The Policy Guide includes 13 recommended actions that include better statewide water and land use planning, the creation of a statewide water plan, increased affordable housing options, and the establishment of a "Fix it First" policy that would prioritize the maintenance of existing highways over new construction.

"Our hope is that our candidates for governor listen to what the voters are saying. We need leadership in Santa Fe to address the quality of life issues we all care about: water and land use planning, protection of our beautiful open spaces, providing more affordable housing, and prioritizing state funding for maintaining

schools and roads in our existing communities," insists Joseph Montoya, a senior planning consultant for 1000 Friends of New Mexico.

For more information please contact Lehua Lopez-Mau, Staff Director for the New Mexico Coalition for a Livable Future at (505) 848-8232 ext. 106.

NEWS FROM THE NM TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE TEAMS

CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN: ATTENTION TO THE PROCESS AND THE PLACE

Joanne McEntire, AICP

The Cultural Landscapes/Flexible Highway Standards Team met this June to examine how Context Sensitive Design (CSD) has been developed as a normal mode of operations in some state highway departments around the US - and how it could be helpful in New Mexico. The meeting included perspectives from transportation and community advocates from Cerrillos, Hondo Valley, Los Lunas/Valencia County, and Albuquerque. Information from a presentation given by Joanne McEntire is briefly described in the following.

CSD is "an approach that places preservation of historic, scenic, natural environment, and other community values on an equal basis with mobility, safety and economics," according to Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters. The FHWA created a pilot project to define and practice CSD with five states' Departments of Transportation (DOT): Kentucky, Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, and Utah. Research indicates that the state trained their staff, consultants, stakeholders, local government workers and other related groups on utilizing a flexible approach towards the design of highway projects.

Connecticut's DOT conducted a variety of at least nine training and outreach actions during their pilot project. They have integrated a flexible approach in the design of highway improvements while taking care to ensure that the public is consulted and included in all stages of their projects. Each project is required to have a Public Involvement Plan that is individually tailored to the project. Visualization techniques - as simple as sketches or complex as three-dimensional models - can be used to show existing conditions and proposed changes to public participants.

Maryland created a process that is changing their mode of decision-making about highway projects. The DOT assigned a coordinator to organize and implement the actions needed to make CSD a common practice. Several teams were established to get organized, evaluate projects and decision-making processes, and conduct training in the improvement strategies that the department employees generated. One of the lessons they learned was that initial contact with stakeholders in the community should occur before the scope of a project is determined. The biggest problems occur when an issue is not identified early enough to be in the scope. Planners and engineers now understand how to utilize flexible approaches and include public involvement strategies, but the organizers learned that such a change in behavior could not be accomplished with just one workshop.

A context sensitive design conference was conducted in Montana after the pilot project with FHWA was completed. FHWA is advancing CSD in State DOTs and with other partners. State legislative action can be taken to urge their DOT to understand and implement context sensitive design. In addition, the state's executive and DOT leadership can be key players in determining whether CSD is institutionalized in its transportation/highway bureaucracy.

DAN BURDEN TRAINS LOCAL PEDESTRIAN ADVOCATES

Jonathon LaValley, UNM Department of Emergency Medicine

On March 14th and 15th, 2002 the New Mexico Pedestrian Safety Project hosted a special training in Albuquerque for pedestrian advocates from all over the state. The training was sponsored by the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department, New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau, and administered by the University of New Mexico, Department of Emergency Medicine.

This training is an annual component of the Walkable Communities Initiative, a project that works toward improved pedestrian safety and walkability through community empowerment. Through these annual trainings, the Walkable Communities Initiative seeks to assist these communities with local pedestrian problem identification, community walkability assessment, and action-focused strategic plans that address specific and local pedestrian safety and walkability issues.

Pedestrian advocates from seven different New Mexico communities including Albuquerque, Alamogordo, Las Cruces, Los Alamos, Zuni Pueblo, Isleta Pueblo, Silver City, and Clovis attended the event as well as interested individuals from City of Albuquerque Planning Department, New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department, the New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau, the University of New Mexico, and local law enforcement.

Dan Burden was the facilitator and presenter for the training. Mr. Burden has 25 years of experience in developing, promoting, and evaluating alternative transportation facilities, traffic calming practices, and sustainable community design. He served for 16 years as Florida DOT's State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, and he presently works as Executive Director of Walkable Communities, Inc., a non-profit corporation helping communities become more walkable.

Mr. Burden's two-day seminar focused on the art of conducting a walking audit, which brings planners, traffic engineers and advocates to the pedestrian level in order to better assess the walkability and safety of pedestrian facilities. As proving grounds for the audits, Mr. Burden and the group met with and received information at soon to be implemented new pedestrian facility locations along Central Avenue in Albuquerque and the Uptown area near the Coronado and Winrock Malls. These audits then supplied data, photos, and comments for the next days events where Mr. Burden presented how Albuquerque could become a more walkable community, with specific engineering, planning, and traffic calming strategies that are applicable locally.

GETTING THERE IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY

Ken Hughes, Sierra Club Transportation Chair, Rio Grande Chapter

So here I am, stuck at the intersection of St. Francis and Cerrillos, watching two lanes turn south, then two other lanes go straight. Finally it's my turn and I go north on St. Francis, though I am prohibited from turning left to go south on Cerrillos. Then the thought hits me: why doesn't Santa Fe have what places as diverse as Vail, Washington, DC and Chester, England have? And that is intersections blessed with roundabouts, a major form of traffic circles.

Roundabouts need no traffic lights, which saves \$100,000's in capital and operating costs. Instead they rely on common courtesy of yielding to traffic already in the circle to regulate traffic flow. Backups are minimal, often in the range of 2- 5 seconds, and the motorist can choose to go any which way.

Major intersections such as St. Francis and Cerrillos have 32 points of potential accidents; add in the train passing through it, and little wonder that it is the third most dangerous intersection in the state. A roundabout reduces accident points to 8, and left turn accidents, the most common kind at intersections, are reduced 95 percent.

Trains, even the commuter versions needed between here and Albuquerque, can easily be accommodated with signalized crossings or pop up ballards; pedestrians likewise. No widening of the intersection is needed, as there is already plenty of room to install one. The corners save the Deaf School's could be filled in with liner commercial buildings, and the roundabout could host a statue representing the city's culture. This would make the statement to motorists and train passengers alike that they have truly arrived in downtown Santa Fe, minutes from the forthcoming railyard and historic downtown plazas.

Other intersections in Santa Fe that could easily accommodate and could greatly benefit from roundabouts include: St. Francis and W. Alameda; St. Francis and Zia; Paseo de Peralta and N. Guadalupe; Paseo de Peralta and S. Guadalupe; Old Las Vegas Highway and Old Pecos Trail; Airport, Rodeo and Cerrillos Roads; St. Francis and Cordova; St. Francis and Siringo.

Many of these intersections could serve as neighborhood nodes, accommodating a mix of commercial, office and apartment units in densities higher than allowed in surrounding zoning. As roundabouts both calm and accommodate greater volumes of traffic, perhaps they would nullify "NIMBYs" who otherwise oppose traffic generators.

Roundabouts are becoming more commonplace in American cities throughout the U.S., with new ones popping up in places such as Park City, Pagosa Springs and Ogden. Santa Fe stands poised to take advantage of an eminently sensible and civilized approach to transforming what for most is a frustrating and potentially dangerous daily situation into a beautifying and calming asset. And if the state Highway Department nixes the idea on the state roads running through the city, then we should post the US 84 and 285 designations out on the bypass, where they belong, and let our city planning and public works folks work out the design aesthetics.

RAILS, INC.

J.W Madison and Dolores Gravning, RAILS, Inc.

RAILS, Inc. is a volunteer, non-profit 501-C-3 action group trying to bring back passenger rail in New Mexico through public education and awareness. Our effort emphasizes personal presentations, literature, print media, radio, TV, and a website. RAILS has a traveling presentation called "Passenger Rail - Everybody but Us," in which we try to acquaint people with the many advantages of rail transportation.

Although there is an intermodal transportation renaissance happening in America, New Mexico is lagging behind, and has a long way to go to catch up with the rest of the southwest. NM seems to be securely in the grip of powerful interests with a mindset stuck firmly in the 1950s.

In a state that has pioneered many exciting changes in energy and alternative ways of living, it's pretty pathetic that all our neighbor states are making us look a half-century out of date. After a trip to Denver, we are more strongly convinced that our beloved NM is indeed the Empty Quarter in transportation. We spent several days riding and admiring their intermodal transportation system. The light rail is very sensibly laid out both for access to key destinations as well as sites marked for redevelopment and a future transit orientation, and construction has begun on several new lines.

Most impressive is how Denver has oriented their bus system to complement principal highways and the trains. Their free propane/electric shuttle buses have been an important factor in revitalizing downtown into a business, shopping, and entertainment hub. Denver is further proof that bus service works best as part of a multi-modal system anchored by rail.

RAILS welcomes support; we are looking for public speakers, letter writers, people to attend appropriate meetings and, or course, funds.

RAILS, Inc.
PO Box 4268
Albuquerque, NM 87196
Phone: 268-2884
e-mail: rails@nmrailsorg
website: www.nmrails.org

NATIONAL NEWS

WILL YOU BE TRAPPED IN TRAFFIC WHEN YOU VISIT NATIONAL PARKS?

Source: http://www.npca.org/take_action/action_alerts/

Congress will soon reauthorize the gas tax, which helps pay for mass transportation systems. Unfortunately, the \$8 million currently available through the federal gas tax for developing national park shuttle bus

systems and bike and pedestrian trails is hopelessly inadequate for meeting park needs. Recently, the Department of Transportation

estimated that the National Park Service will need more than \$1.5 billion during the next 20 years to meet anticipated demand for alternative transportation nearly ten times the present funding level.

Congressional members need to hear about the congestion visitors encounter in national parks. They also need to hear about parks where shuttle buses and bike and pedestrian trails have improved the visitor experience, such as Zion and Acadia.

TAKE ACTION! Please visit <www.npca.org/take_action/action_alerts/> or personalize the sample letter below to let Congress know about YOUR experiences with park roads and transportation systems. For more information contact lloomis@npca.org.

CENSUS DATA TELLS STORY OF NARROWING CHOICES

From Transfer, STPP's Electronic Newsletter June 13, 2002; Volume 8 Issue 11

More Americans living, working in places with few travel options enduring longer commutes, and fewer of them are able to use transit, walking, or other means to avoid the drive. The average trip to work is up more than three minutes since 1990 to 25.5 minutes, and a higher portion of commuters are driving alone to work.

"These figures confirm that travel choices are narrowing for many Americans when it comes to the work trip," said David Burwell, President of the Surface Transportation Policy Project. "More people are living and working in places where they have little choice but to spend a significant part of their day driving in traffic."

STPP has created a variety of materials to help transportation professionals, journalists, and advocates interpret the data:

A new issue of "Decoding Transportation Policy and Practice" that looks at the limitations of the Census Journey to Work data and provides other statistics that give a fuller picture of travel behavior.

Easy-to-use, downloadable Excel documents showing metropolitan area, county, and place-level transportation Census data for each state.

A brief analysis of what the numbers may mean, including a look at how

housing and work patterns may have influenced the transportation numbers.

A news release issued on the day the national numbers came out.

All of this information is available at www.transact.org.

FORMER NEW ORLEANS MAYOR MARC MORIAL JOINS STPP BOARD

From Transfer, STPP's Electronic Newsletter June 13, 2002; Volume 8 Issue 11

Marc Morial, the Mayor of New Orleans from 1994 to 2002, has joined STPP's Board of Directors. Mr. Morial's administration was marked by his work to revitalize neighborhoods and build the local economy through infrastructure investments. Additionally, he served as President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors from 2001-2002, where he led that organization's national rail initiative to advance development of rail travel in the United

States.

Mr. Morial is a long-time believer in STPP's work, and spoke at the Ten

Years

of Progress anniversary dinner in December. He joins eight current Board members: Sarah Campbell (chair), David Burwell, Scott Bernstein, Hank Dittmar, Tom Downs, Judith Espinosa, Kathryn Higgins, and Jessica

Mathews.

RESOURCES

NM TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Do you find this e-newsletter helpful, informative, interesting? This issue is the third of the series. Please send us a note and let us know your opinion! Please send e-mail to dvalencia@transact.org.

Context Sensitive Design and the FHWA on the web:

<www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd/index.htm>

The NM Transportation Information Exchange is a publication of the Surface Transportation Policy Project's New Mexico office. Editing this issue: Joanne McEntire and DeAnza Valencia. To subscribe, send your name, address, e-mail and affiliation.

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.