



US 180 PUBLIC MEETING NOTES

MEETING DATE: March 4, 2021 TIME: 6:30 – 8:00 PM

SUBJECT: US 180 Public Meeting (via Zoom)

NMDOT and Consultant Panelists:

Arthur Romero - Project Manager, NMDOT
Trent Doolittle - District Engineer, NMDOT District 1
Aaron Chavarria – Assistant District Engineer, NMDOT District 1
Joshua Holguin – NMDOT Environmental Bureau
Dave Pennington – Presenter, Parametrix
Chris Baca – Engineer, Parametrix
Brent Hamlin – Moderator, Parametrix
Jim Buckman – Engineer, Parametrix
Jeff Fredine, - Environmental, Parametrix
Stephanie Miller – Planner, Parametrix
Tyler Pennington – Planner, Parametrix
Brian Morkert – Back-Up Moderator, Parametrix

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss existing conditions on US 180 and the results of the US 180 Corridor Study. A presentation was given during the first 35 minutes of the meeting that explained the purpose of the US 180 corridor study, existing conditions, and alternatives considered, and NMDOT’s recommended alternative. After the presentation, the NMDOT and consultant team answered questions from the public.

Meeting Attendance

In addition to the 12 NMDOT and consultant presenters/panelists, 34 members of the public attended the meeting. Six of the 34 citizens called in via the phone and the remaining 28 participants attended online. Most of the 34 attendees participated for the entire meeting. Because the meeting was conducted virtually, a formal sign-in sheet was not provided, so full names and contact information are not available.

The 34 attendees included the following NMDOT District staff members that were not panelists: Andres Linnan, Ami Evans, Harold Love, and Gene Paulk. Other known participants included: Ed Stevens, Hurley Mayor; Commissioner Chris Ponce, Chair, Grant County Commissioner; Rudy Martinez, former NM State Representative from District 39 (Dona Ana, Grant, and Sierra counties); Rebecca Summer, Grant County, Silver City Bicycle Advocacy Group; Gila Friends Meeting; and Dean Thompson, journalist from the Silver City Daily Press.

Question and Answer Session:

1. Questions (Q), Vandy and Gary (38:35): We live at Butterfield Trail Estates, is there a reason that a turn lane with acceleration and deceleration lanes were not added at this location?
 - Response (R), Dave: This is an area that can be reassessed to see if a turn lane is warranted in the area, due to a number of homes located near this area, it does warrant further research.
 - Q, Vandy and Gary: This is a dangerous intersection. Many community members pull onto the shoulder and wait for a gap before entering the highway due to dangerous highway speeds.

- R, Dave: This will definitely be something we look into more.
- R, Trent: For the attendees, work on this corridor is the initial planning stages to determine the alternative. Once the alternative has been decided, then more specific details, such as turn lanes at the Butterfield Trail Estates intersection, will be developed and there will be additional opportunities for public meetings. Thank you for your comments.

2. Q, Former Representative Rudy Martinez (41:20): Is US 180 eligible for federal funds?

- R, Trent: Thank you, Representative Martinez, for your question. US 180 is eligible for federal and state funding. Federal funds were used to four lane US 180 north of Deming. Being eligible for federal and state funding provides a large amount of opportunity to procure funding for this project.
- Q, Rudy: Thank you for that answer. I do have a comment: there was a \$300 million appropriation for projects for this year, would any of those funds be eligible to be used on this project?
- R, Trent: There are some time limits and other constraints on these funds. Since work on this corridor is in the initial planning stages, it seems more likely that that the \$300 million will go towards projects that are further along in the process.
- Q, Rudy: Thank you Secretary Sandoval for providing the funding for this study. Previous administrations had completed studies on this corridor and had plans to implement the corridor as a 4-lane, and this project is still on the books as a GRIP project. My personal opinion is that Grant county would benefit from additional growth potential that could be provided by implementation of a 4-lane alternative.

3. Q, Terry (45:00): I would like to echo the earlier comments from Gary and Vandy regarding safety concerns about the intersection at Butterfield Estates. I appreciate the proposed passing lanes, but I am concerned about how the passing lanes and turning lanes might interact with the intersection near the turnoff for Butterfield. Please take a look at how the passing lanes and intersections interact. Please take another look at the possibility of turning lanes at Butterfield Estates.

- R, Dave: We appreciate that comment and will look into it further when we get into detailed design with a preferred alternative.

4. Q, Rebecca Summer, Grant County, Silver City Bicycle Advocacy Group (46:50): I wanted to make a comment and say that I appreciate that your design does include 6-foot lanes on both sides of the road. This is New Mexico Bike Route 18, and part of the southern tier of NM bicycle routes made by the adventure cyclists. Given the location of the section, and its relative flatness, it is considered a connector between mountains in the north and Mexico in the south. As the design proceeds, we would like to discuss the placement of rumble strips with the hope that there can be some breaks in the strips to provide spaces for cyclists to move in and out of the shoulder for turns without damaging their tire or gears.

- R, Dave: Rebecca, we appreciate your comments and have received the information you have sent, we will continue to take bicyclists into consideration as we approach final design.

5. Q, Lori and Barrett (48:50): We are concerned about an expansion of lighting within the project area. What are the plans for implementing lighting along the project area?

- R, Dave: At this time only certain intersections that require additional lighting for safety reasons are being considered, these include areas such as the rest stop intersection.
- R, AJ: Just an additional note, if NMDOT does implement lighting, we currently use full cutoff LED lighting, which are in full compliance with the NM Night Sky Protection Act.
- R, Dave: We are aware that the neighborhood behind the rest stop includes residents that are concerned about lighting and potential impacts related to night sky viewing.

6. Q, Gerald (51:00): Will the entire project be worked on at the same time with different construction paths, or will segments be completed at different times? What area ways that traffic delays can be minimized?
 - R, Trent: Each segment costs vary; the expectation is that costs will determine which segments are completed and when. Due to crash history in segment one, it is believed that this will be the first segment constructed. However, if the funding becomes available to complete the project in its entirety then this could be an option. Based on the size of this project, it is unlikely that the funding to complete the project in its entirety will be available initially. In terms of minimizing delays, time constraints are an option. Additionally, this project provides an opportunity for two new lanes to be constructed while the previous roadway remains used to carry traffic. Ways to minimize delays to traffic during construction will be considered as the project moves forward.
7. Q, Phone caller, Jan (53:15): I really appreciate the dialog presented tonight. Would it be possible to investigate Kirkland road with this project? It is a very dangerous intersection, and would it be something that could be added to the projects scope?
 - R, Trent: NMDOT is aware of this intersection and some of the concerns in this area. NMDOT has examined the area and met with county officials to discuss it. Kirkland Road is outside of the project area for this US 180 Corridor Study. Possible changes in the Kirkland Road area can be considered outside of this Corridor Study.
8. Q, Commissioner Chris Ponce (57:10): Chair at the Grant County Board of Commissioners. Jan, we have met with Trent at NMDOT and discussed the concerns at Kirkland Road. One of my biggest concerns with passing lanes, is that some vehicles do not pay attention to when passing lanes are ending, and that can create a dangerous situation, has that been considered?
 - R, Dave: This can be a problem, but to help minimize this possibility, the passing lanes we are proposing are very long to allow for ample safe passing space. Most of the proposed passing lanes would be about 2 miles long to provide enough space for drivers to have space to safely pass. Design would also include signage to indicate where the passing lanes begin and end.
 - R, AJ: In addition, the sight distance on US 180 is really good in areas where we are proposing passing lanes, which will also minimize potential issues with passing lanes.
9. Q, Phone caller, Ed Stevens, Mayor of Hurley (1:05): From Santa Clara to Bayard there is a walking path that has been built. With this project, is there potential for a new walking path to be built between Hurley and Bayard? Second, when Hurley residents use the landfill, they use the Hurley overpass to access the landfill. If this overpass is taken out, will there be a westbound access to the landfill?
 - R, Trent: We're not at a point to discuss the specifics of a walking path, but I would expect NMDOT to continue having these discussions with Hurley and others as the design progresses.
 - R, AJ: We have talked with the Mayors of Hurley and Bayard. We have a wide shoulder for bicycles that could also accommodate pedestrians to/from Hurley and Bayard.
 - R, Dave: If the bridge is removed, there will be an at-grade intersection with turn lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes that would allow access across US 180 to the landfill. Does that answer your question?
 - Q, Mayor Stevens: Yes, it does. It was my understanding that the overpass would be removed. If the bridge stays intact, there is no issue. My understanding was that the bridge might be taken out, is my understanding incorrect?
 - R, Dave: If US 180 is widened to 4 lanes, the overpass/bridge would be removed.
 - R, AJ: AJ has discussed this issue with the Mayor and was informed that the overpass is used for trucks transporting sulfuric acid for mine. AJ has talked with Mayor Stevens to discuss

implementing another way to allow truck access to US 180. If we remove the bridge, an at-grade access will be provided, and trucks will be able to make a right turn onto US 180.

- R, Dave: Mayor Stevens, we are happy to discuss this comment further offline to clear up any remaining questions you may have.

Trent: Thank you to everyone who participated in this meeting. This is the first step to the long process of improving this roadway. This is a priority project for District 1 and the NMDOT as a whole. Thank you for your time to meet with us tonight.

10. Q, Rudy Martinez (1:08:30): The biggest priority is the safety of the roadway. Thank you for the presentation and the dialogue. When will the next public engagement meeting or webinar be held?

- R, Dave: The next phase of this project after this public meeting phase has concluded. Most likely the next public outreach would occur sometime in the May timeframe. Nothing has been scheduled as of yet, but we will continue to keep the public notified of the project. Please go to our website and sign up to be on our mailing list if you want to receive future notifications.

11. Q, Gerald (1:10:20): Can you give approximate completion dates for this project with full, quick funding and limited, slow funding?

- R, Trent: At this point, we don't know, since NMDOT doesn't have funding for final design. The design cannot go to full design until we have construction funding. Completion will depend on when funding is available. It is too early to determine completion dates. It really depends on funding and much we are able to get.
- R, Dave: The study phase of the project helps to determine how much funding will be needed to complete this project. This allows for NMDOT to begin searching for project funding.

12. Q, Anonymous (1:12:40): Have there been any discussions or considerations about a possible wildlife corridor either over or under the highway?

- R, Dave: We have identified locations within the corridor where car collisions have occurred with deer or other wildlife. The corridor is not within the designated wildlife corridors that the NMDOT is looking at throughout the state. We did look at what opportunities there might be for wildlife crossings in the first 4 miles of the project, since that is the area when most of the wildlife collisions have occurred. No suitable areas were identified where wildlife could safely and easily be diverted under the highway. Because of this, no wildlife corridors are being considered at this point.
- R, Stephanie: Just to add, the proposed recommendation in the first few miles of the corridor is to widen US 180 to a 4-lane highway. This additional roadway width will provide an opportunity for drivers to have more space to maneuver to potentially avoid collisions with wildlife.
- R, Josh: Widening the roadway around Hurley would help provide additional safety and visibility for drivers to avoid animal collisions.

Dave: Thank you to everyone who has participated. Your comments are very important to finalizing the corridor study. We will publish all comments received and responses to those comments in the final report. Please continue to submit your comments. Please try to get us your comments by March 18, 2021. We do want to hear from you.

AJ: Thank you to everyone who attended the meeting and thank you for asking questions and providing comments.