

Meeting Notes From Public Meeting on the GRIP I-40 Project in Tijeras Canyon on June 16, 2005

*Please note that all NMDOT responses are italicized

I am from the Monticello Neighborhood Association. I haven't heard you mention NM 333. *The project is for I-40. Some of game fencing will extend around NM 333. We are focusing on I-40. Fencing will focus animals at specific locations. Signs will be provided for drivers along NM 333. Implementing Phase A recommendations for the I-40 corridor. Phase B will be additional complements including NM 333. We are working with NMDGF to develop monitoring.*

With the news release, are you going to refer to NM 333 in Tres Pistolas Canyon? I have not heard anything practical. What is the animal trail from Tres Pistolas Canyon spring? How are you going to direct the animals?

Dead Man's Curve and Carlitos Spring Road are crossing points.

Are you going to put culverts under NM 333 at Tres Pistolas Canyon?

Not under Phase A – perhaps in Phase B.

You are going to leave people at risk at Tres Pistolas?

The project focuses on I-40.

How long is the construction period?

Early spring to Thanksgiving.

I haven't seen in-depth analysis of where collisions trials are?

There has been an analysis. We have presented initial field findings. The report should be at the NMDOT next week. We will have it on the internet. A copy is not available for comment at this time.

What provisions are included in plans to prevent the spread of invasive species?

We will have provisions to wash vehicles. Only Class C species have been found.

There is an opportunity to remove plants in construction area.

We will be doing that at locations like Tijeras Arroyo. We have to address southwestern willow flycatcher habitat.

There was discussion about putting watering stations on north side of highway.

We will be working with Game and Fish. They are talking about putting in watering locations for deer on the north side of the road. Part of the solution is to develop drinker locations. We are partnering with Game and Fish and perhaps the Forest Service.

Can you detail any of the plans for Phase B?

Phase B deals with hot spots on NM 333. One of the most important recommendations is a wildlife underpass near Dead Man's curve. There is a water hole at Tijeras Arroyo. We are

looking at putting a ramp access to culvert near Dead Man's curve. The culvert only has a 1:1 openness factor so it may be a problem. Another part of Phase B is the exit at Carnuel. Wildlife get caught at the triangular diamond. We want to provide a complex pattern of fences to move wildlife to one point to an overland crossing of NM 333 where sensors are located. Phase B would go to Exit 170 to 175. We are going to tie wildlife fence to an existing fence. Breaks in the chain link fence will have to be repaired. There are a lot of wildlife collisions in this area. There is wildlife moving through this entire area.

What efforts are being taken in Phase A so we don't sub-optimize Phase B/

We put in a temporal phasing. The last thing would be to put in the final phase. There are also plans for the Carlito's Springs bridge. We are proposing to move guardrails in to provide wildlife with an earthen path. The overall recommendation is to phase these things.

There is no funding for Phase B?

Funding will come from partnering or project development alternatives. The underpass would be the key recommendation.

How would monitoring be done?

There would be visits at each location at the major crossings twice a week from two months prior to construction through 5 months after construction followed by monitoring of crash data on I-40 and NM 333.

Will you continue the analysis in the season following?

Mark Watson of Game and Fish will do the lion's share of the monitoring.

Kat Hummel – gave presentation on the Tijeras Safe Passage Coalition. We are focused on getting safe passages incorporated into construction plans. We would like to present some comments. Our web site and contact information is on the two handouts that we brought today. The coalition wants to comment DOT for this groundbreaking work. We urge DOT to implement recommendations from Marron's feasibility study. The recommendations will safeguard people and animals. The safety of motorists is an immediate concern. The DOT can go a long way by implementing these recommendations. I-40 and Route 66 are dangerous barriers for animals. We agree with the multi-phase framework and use of the fencing to funnel animals to safe highway crossings. The study identifies important and inexpensive measures. The study has the potential to allow New Mexico to be a leader in wildlife crossings and implementing context sensitive design. This will require multi-year commitments to monitoring and implementing commitments. We advocate a larger perspective from Albuquerque to Moriarty. The coalition offers our assistance.

Kurt of coalition – We prepared written comments, 45 pages worth of comments. Fencing: we don't recommend electrobrade fencing in entire project, only in specific areas. The benefits of electrobrade: it is strong; animals can't crawl under it; and it is aesthetic. The eastern end of project area is good for electrobrade fencing. We don't advocate its use in the more heavily populated areas – rather use the 7-foot fence. We don't recommend lighting. People can be temporarily blinded. It is a deterrent to wildlife movement, and it causes sight pollution. We recommend carefully directed low pressured sodium light if needed. Permeability points: Effective wildlife crossing structures are needed. We recommend enhancement of existing structures. We recommend an open span wildlife bridge at Deadman's Curve for mule deer. Look at options for vegetated overpasses funded with TEA-21. Access to water: Tijeras Creek

provides critical water supply. The fence will block access to creek. Deer and other wildlife will be adversely affected. We recommended two wildlife watering holes: north of Exit 170 and in the middle of canyon. We feel long-term success needs monitoring and adaptive management. We are concerned that the monitoring year could be strange year so need long-term. Need to use adaptive management. Track plates, cameras, video surveillance, data automatically collected from RAD system, collecting and analyzing road kill data, radio GPS telemetry data of local wildlife populations. Pollution: the quality of water will impact wildlife and human populations. Project related activities should not contaminate water. Consider effects of road spills. Non-point source spills are getting into the creek. In depth comments are on our web site.

I am chairman of Ciudad Conservation District. The major issue is the water pollution issue. We will submit brief comments. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System requires pollution control, best management practices during construction. There is an opportunity for DOT to look at the long-term. Prevent pollution of Tijeras Creek. We are urging is for department to look long term at best management practices to protect ecosystem and Tijeras Creek for years to come.

This is just one of the phases connecting Tramway and Sedillo. When will all of this this occur. We are getting tired of all this construction.

The project in Sedillo was to be completed in December last year. Our accident rate has gone up in that area along with road rage. Why are we almost hitting July, and the project is in progress. *The department is extremely frustrated with the pace of the project. The project contract has an incentive and disincentive feature. We are 5-7 months over the deadline. The fines are mounting.*

From a public safety standpoint, these are concerns that need to be addressed.

One right after the other - in Albuquerque from Tramway to Louisiana - it gets a bit old. *We are hitting the east side pretty hard with this. This is the time to do it based on funding and condition of roadway.*

Who is the contractor?

David Montoya. He was supposed to be done a long time ago.

This is up to you as citizens to address to DOT and governors office.

Is this contractor prohibited from bidding on other jobs?

No.

Why not?

No, they are not.

Will the department put the same incentive/disincentive in these projects as well? Are the fines a deterrent?

In general the fines are a deterrent.

Do you have a construction time line?

Begin early spring 2006 and complete in about 1 year.

These Jersey barriers separating lanes and shoulders, 3 sets – I have a hard time with those things. There is a safety reason that dictates their use. I would like to hear specifics on why we must have these. It would be a nice appendix to the study saying why these concrete dividers are necessary. I would like to be persuaded.

We are obliged by federal policy to put in a barrier: concrete wall barrier, metal barrier, or post and cable crash barrier. Of these three options, we prefer concrete wall barrier to channel water flow to culverts.

What about studies about lives saved?

Our mission is to keep traffic on the road with wall barriers.

Animals that get trapped – there is an awful strong tendency for people to jerk the wheel – that creates a risk.

We weighed those risks with cable barrier vs. wall barrier. We went in favor of trying to control where the roadway runoff is going.

It sounds like the Jersey Barrier will be a solid barrier. Why not have an offset system so emergency vehicles can get through but opposing traffic couldn't?

You're right. When we're finished with this project, we will have emergency gaps. We will have a moveable gate for emergency vehicles to change direction. We are looking for gaps for driver safety.

My question pertains to the side traffic. A lot of this frustrating traffic is using Sedillo – this is coming a major thoroughfare. What gets done to control traffic speed on side routes. Whose responsibility is it?

You're right. The alternate route relieves traffic. It can be our responsibility. It can be set up in the plans. It will be set in plans.

I am very concerned with Route 66. They are driving 75 miles per hour on that thing.

Sheriff deputy – My orders are to patrol that area. I can't be there all the time.

It is a side consequence of all this construction. I would like to see that addressed.

Sheriff deputy – Have you thought to allocation one lane for emergency vehicles (during construction)? If it is a life threatening situation, time is of the essence.

No we have not considered that type of lane for reasons of money and in some cases right-of-way.

Sheriff deputy – The main objective of public safety is saving people's lives. Our delay can be 20-40 minutes.

Would a shoulder assist that?

Sheriff – I'm talking about during construction.

How successful are those three barriers in stopping fully loaded semis.

CWB is most effective.

Sheriff- Semis tend to pull over into your lane with concrete barrier.

The sign says it is a double fine zone. We should implement what sheriff says.

At Dead Man's curve and jersey barrier – wildlife can cross one jersey barrier and get caught in the middle of the lane. Then you have an accident.

You're referring to NM 333. Fencing will funnel deer away from that area. Currently it is directing deer into westbound traffic lane.

What is the fence height fence?

Standard fence is 7-foot; electric is 4-6 foot. The final fencing hasn't been decided. It is recommend on NM 333 in Phase A. It is part of a solution. Phase B recommends an underpass in that location.

Do plans take in account of black bear?

They are mapped in there. The culverts should convey bear, cougar, raccoon, and medium sized mammals. By putting barrier wall on shoulder, it will force small mammals to use culverts. Deer could get across the barriers. We could have dips in the barriers, where deer could have a lower spot to jump over.

If its doing, its worth doing right. You might as well cover all the bases to the max in Phase A rather than go half way.

There is no funding for B at all. If you have no funding for B, you should do A.

Phase A is a self sufficient wildlife project.

Will future meetings address rehabilitating seven bridges? How will Canyon Estates traffic be handled?

The proposed traffic control plan is to build one direction of traffic while traffic is shifted over to the other lanes. That will require crossovers. In your specific instance, the plan is to cross I-40 to north 14 and over. You would face that for half of the project.

Will the bridges be done in sequence?

Half the bridge will be closed. Then we will work at other side.

What is the next step?

We will finish the design, look at recommendations and input from tonight, finish the plans, and put out to contract.

Do you have a web site?

Tijeras and Ciudad have asked for written responses. I don't have a problem making them public.

Funding of Phase A vs. B. Did A go easier because it is interstate funding? Phase B involves a former US highway that serves as frontage road.

I don't know how to answer the additional funding of an access road. I have heard from two organizations that they are willing to provide money, and the classily informed letters has helped with funding.

You are going to put flashing lights in. Are there other steps you are going to take to alert motorists that it is a high traffic area?

We intend to implement signing and flashing lights. RAD or additional lights will depend on the results of the monitoring. Is there a problem, what is the nature of the problem?

Does the DOT have criteria for contractor selection?

There is a list of criteria on the DOT on web site.