

CHAPTER 2 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

2.1 Agency Coordination

Coordination with impacted agencies and the fostering of public involvement is an ongoing process throughout this US550 project. An Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was prepared for the project and will be followed over the course of the alignment study. The PIP presents the process to be followed and activities to be conducted to keep stakeholders informed on the project and involved in the evaluation and decision making process. Stakeholders for this project include, but are not limited to: federal and state resource agencies having jurisdiction over the natural and cultural resources potentially affected by the project; local and municipal governmental entities; tribal governments; and businesses, landowners and residents that use the US 550 facility. The PIP is intended to be a dynamic document that is updated and revised as needed during the course of the project. The PIP is also an important part of the *Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Management Plan* prepared for this project. The current version of the PIP and CSS Plan are on file with the NMDOT.

The PIP activities conducted and stakeholder input received to date are as follows:

2.2 Public Involvement Meeting – November 7, 2013

A public meeting was held on November 7, 2013 at the New Mexico Workforce Connection Center in Bernalillo. Thirty-three stakeholders attended the meeting. The project team gave a presentation on existing conditions and potential options for resolving transportation issues. Stakeholders identified the following issues:

- Traffic congestion in general along US 550;
- Plans for the Rio Grande bridge;
- Signal coordination;
- Concern about Sheriff's Posse Road and Don Tomas intersections;
- Promote alternative transportation modes;
- Percent truck traffic;
- Project schedule;
- Bicycles facilities for commuters;
- Consider 6-foot bicycle lanes throughout corridor;
- Consider a separate bridge for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians;
- Provide a scenic nature connection at river;
- Future gridlock;
- Role of pueblos;
- Need to preserve Bernalillo's small town image;
- Possibility of reversible lanes for commuting traffic;
- Consider a parking lot west of NM 528 for commuters;
- Protect historic areas off of US 550 need protection;

- Vehicle speeds on US 550;
- Consider bus rapid transit; and
- Consider pedestrian crossings with Lightguard technology.

2.3 Stakeholder Involvement

The first project stakeholder meeting was held September 5, 2013. The project management team and stakeholders identified community and social issues important to communities near US 550. Three distinct communities border US 550 within the project area. The Pueblo of Santa Ana is a Native American community with a history that predates the arrival of the Spanish in New Mexico. Bernalillo was for many years a community that served farmers and travelers in Sandoval County; but in the last 50 years, it has started to resemble a suburban community. Rio Rancho is the youngest of the three communities, but it has experienced the fastest growth of any New Mexico city during the last 30 years. The Pueblo of Santa Ana, Bernalillo, and Rio Rancho have distinct characteristics and priorities that are being addressed through the project development process. US 550 is a vital transportation artery for all three communities. The Pueblo of Santa Ana, Bernalillo, and Rio Rancho were priority communities for inclusion in public involvement and identification of community and social issues. In addition, local neighborhood groups and business associations were invited to participate in project public involvement events. To address community issues, stakeholder input was integrated with design team recommendations. Stakeholder engagement was achieved through a public information meeting, stakeholder meetings, and conversations with individual stakeholders, especially property owners and business managers along US 550. It should be mentioned that the community of Placitas located along US 550 on the east side of I-25 would also be considered a stakeholder as a proportion of the residents could be employed in Rio Rancho. Additionally there are many commercial trip attractions for this community. Although there were no representatives of this community at the stakeholder meetings, they will be included in stakeholder meeting for the next phases.

A follow-up stakeholder meeting was held May 7, 2014 to give stakeholders a preview of the Phase 1A Report and the design alternatives that were being assessed.

2.4 Area Business Owner Involvement

Two meetings were held at the New Mexico Workforce Connection Center in Bernalillo, Albuquerque with area business owners on September 26, 2013. Business owner comments, concerns, and questions included the following:

- Business owners were interested in the addition of more pedestrian facilities along the corridor.
- Transit was indicated as an important aspect of the corridor
- There was interest in where additional signals would be placed along the corridor,

- Some expressed interest in frontage roads.
- Many expressed interest in a separate pedestrian/bicycle facility across the Rio Grande.
- Interest in a signal and realignment of the Sheriff's Posse Road intersection.
- Concern was voiced about sacrificing the sense of community within the Town of Bernalillo versus accommodating commuters.