



Public Information Meeting

Jarales Road (NM 109) and Railroad Grade Separation Project,
Valencia County, New Mexico



Summary

August 18, 2020 – Virtual Public Meeting

A public meeting was held on August 18, 2020, to present the results of the draft Phase I-A/B study and to gather input on the project purpose and need, alternatives analysis, and recommendations. A virtual public meeting was held due to the State's Public Health Orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was advertised by direct mailings to over 100 local residents within and near the project area, a notice published in both the Albuquerque Journal on August 11 and the Valencia County News Bulletin on August 13, email notifications sent to select stakeholders, a press release, and postings on NMDOT social media. A copy of the Meeting Notice is attached.

One hundred one people phoned into the meeting and 107 people viewed the meeting on-line. It is likely some people both phoned in and streamed the meeting on-line. A video presenting the study alternatives and recommendations was played, then comments were received from the attendees. The meeting began at 6:30 PM and ended at 8:30 PM. The presentation started at approximately 6:45 PM (see attached). The presentation covered the following:

- Project Location and History
- Study Process
- Previous Public Involvement
- Existing and Future Conditions
- Purpose and Need
- Preliminary Alternatives and Analysis
- Refined Alternatives and Analysis
- Recommendations

The following comments and questions were discussed at the meeting. Design team responses are indicated in the indented bullets. All statements and responses have been lightly edited.

- Are there plans to increase the number of bridges across the Rio Grande? Alternative C goes through our land (the tier-drop shaped parcel between the railroad tracks and the river crossing). Please describe Alternative C further and discuss plans for additional tracks.
 - Alternative C is the alignment on the east side of NM 109, approximately 70 feet to the east.
 - Additional tracks are being considered for future expansion. Alternative C will span 6 additional tracks for that location (8 tracks total).
 - No alternatives are considering new structures across the river.
- How far north of the existing railroad tracks will the new railroad tracks extend?
 - The NM 109 bridge that gets constructed will need to accommodate future BNSF expansion and those decisions are still being made. The bridge for this project will accommodate future track configurations.
- The attendance of Valencia County Commissioner David Hyder and State Senator Greg Baca was noted.
- Alternative B goes through my property and I'm willing to work with NMDOT and BNSF to get this project done because the bridge is needed. I prefer Alternative B.
 - Your support is noted.
- One meeting participant expressed concern with impacts due to vibration and noise from installation and use of additional tracks on their home.

- Residents could expect additional vibration and noise in the immediate vicinity of the expanded tracks. However, the bridge would separate car and truck vibration and noise from residences
- Although future expansion of the tracks would change noise and vibration levels, these levels would not change due to the roadway project. However, roadway noise would change as a result of the project. Homes near the road would likely experience less noise due to the raised bridge. Noise may travel out further in the community due to the elevation of the bridge; however, traffic levels on NM 109 are low enough that it should not be an issue. A detailed noise study will be conducted during the environmental process.
- Are there any opportunities to fast-track this project?
 - The project is on an aggressive schedule already.
 - A critical-path item for the project schedule is right-of-way. This process takes time. The NMDOT needs to coordinate with impacted property owners.
 - To the extent possible, tasks will be completed concurrently to speed up the process
 - To help with the schedule, the NMDOT needs cooperation and timely reviews from all stakeholders, such as the BNSF. Utility investigations and coordination is also a critical schedule consideration that we are watching closely.
- Is there any consideration of constructing a Rail Runner station in the area so farmers can get produce to Albuquerque?
 - There are no indications from the Rail Runner that they are seeking to expand service but that is a separate conversation that we are willing to have.
 - The NMDOT District 3 has no current plans for Rail Runner expansion. The closest to the project area is the Belen station.
 - According to the NMDOT Railroad Bureau, the transport of freight on a passenger train is not allowed so Rail Runner is not an option.
- Alternative D is more reasonable because it only takes out three buildings.
 - Alternative D takes out fewer structures but has other disadvantages. We are balancing several different metrics to identify a preferred alternative. Alternative C has more advantages as indicated in the Phase A/B Report.
- BNSF has property to support Alternative D without impacting private property.
 - The BNSF right-of-way needs to be preserved for future development plans. The right-of-way is essential for BNSF to serve their customers (freight shippers) in the future. Our right-of-way is irreplaceable and so we need to preserve it and can offer no additional right-of-way to accommodate anything beyond the Alternative C option.
- Today there are three tracks and it sounds like there may be six more for a total of nine. In the report it says eight. Where can I go to get more information on future track expansion? It affects my property directly. How will future BNSF changes affect me and where can I go to get this information?
 - Whatever NM 109 structure is built will accommodate future BNSF construction. BNSF does not have specific details on future expansion plans. Given these unsecure economic times, we cannot speak to specific future development plans. You can go to 'BNSF.com' to ask those questions and we will share those details as they come available.
 - To clarify, there are two different projects here: BNSF has their expansion plans and NMDOT has a project to build a new bridge to take NM 109 over the track expansion area. While they are related, they are two separate projects.
- Thanks for the presentation. I appreciate the information and support the project.
- The preferred Alternative C is the best choice.
- What is the funding source or sources for the project?
 - NMDOT is working with BNSF on this project and BNSF funded the study. The project is partially funded by BNSF and partially by NMDOT with state funds. It is roughly a 50/50 split, maybe 60/40. There are no federal funds associated with the project at this time.
- Where can we get a drawing of Alternative C with more detail?

- You can get this information from the NMDOT website, 'dot.state.nm.us/nmdotprojects.'
- Go to the DOT webpage, click on the three bars in the upper right, then go to DOT projects
- You should be able to access the Phase A/B report that has additional detail on all the alternatives considered.
- When would the process start to acquire properties needed for the project?
 - The process will start with the survey of the project and properties. This will start potentially as early as next week. It will take a couple months to evaluate right-of-way needs. Property owners will get personal visits (potentially virtually or in person or both) by October or November to start those discussions.
- There was a similar question, asked in Spanish, about impacts to a specific property.
 - We recommend you send an email request to the address for the project, jarales@parametrix.com. We can reach out to you with Spanish translation and assess impacts to your property.
- The speed limit in the project area is not 40 mph as indicated in the presentation; it is 30 mph.
- Will NMDOT be adding state or federal funds to make up the funding deficit for the project?
 - The NMDOT will be programming the additional state dollars into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) after estimates are refined based on additional design work. There is \$14.5 million currently programmed for the project.
- What is the expected drop in property values south of the tracks and west of NM 109? What will be road elevation be south of the tracks?
 - The issue of property values was not addressed in the Phase A/B report.
 - Over the tracks, the roadway profile will have a height of 38 feet to 35 feet with transitions.
- Will the NMDOT take into account how agricultural uses of property are diminished by this reduction in property?
 - The appraisals have to take diminished use into account when assessing project impacts.
 - There is also a process for countering the appraisal if the landowner disagrees, but loss of property use is considered in the appraisal process.
- Alternative D is not being considered any longer?
 - The NMDOT is balancing several different aspects including public stakeholder input, but we are recommending Alternative C.
- How far north of the grade separation will the 12-foot lanes and 5-foot shoulders be constructed? Will they continue north to Reinken Avenue?
 - The NMDOT intends to minimize the footprint of the project and stopped all project limits south of Camino de Crystal.
- How long and what height will the bridge be?
 - We are accommodating potential future track expansion and the bridge length will be 330 feet for Alternative C.
 - At least 23.5 feet of vertical clearance is required at the railroad tracks so the roadway will be about 38 feet above tracks.
- Why can't BNSF service the long trains east of Belen? Also, if BNSF is adding five more tracks, how far east will the tracks go? The river bridge only has two tracks. Why can't BNSF stop the trains further west instead of blocking Jarales?
 - The BNSF track network is complex, and we evaluate network needs based on customer needs. We are considering expansion at this location for now.
 - Because of the uncertainty for future development, can't speak to tie-in options at this point.
 - Again, this is an NMDOT bridge project for the moment.
- Will trains blow horns at the crossing after the project is constructed?
 - There will be no specific need after the grade separation is built; however, engineers have the right to sound a horn at any point if they feel there is a safety need.
- There is plenty of commercial property for shipping containers east of the Rio Grande.
 - We will note that in the project record and take that into consideration moving forward.
- How long will it be before the bridge will be open?

- The NMDOT has a very aggressive schedule. The success of the schedule depends on coordination with property owners.
- The design is scheduled for completion by December 2021 and it then takes approximately four months for construction to start.
- We are looking at construction possibly in the Spring of 2022, construction of the bridge alone would take 9 months at a minimum, and the bridge could be open by the end of 2022.
- Will there be any additional meetings after the environmental impact study is completed?
 - Yes, we are anticipating an additional meeting before end of environmental impact study and we will have stakeholder meetings and property owner meetings throughout the design process.
- I prefer Alternative D, but Alternative C makes the most sense.
- With Alternative C, how many additional feet will be taken from the east and west sides of NM 109
 - Alternative C will have a west side take of what is needed for roadway cross section (two 12-foot lanes and 5-foot shoulders, approximately 34 feet). This is because we are using a retaining wall on the west side. The east side will use a more gradual slope to tie the bridge into the ground elevation so it will have a larger footprint, about 120 feet beyond the roadway, or approximately 200 feet east of the existing roadway centerline
- Will this meeting be recorded to view at a later date?
 - We don't have a transcript, but we do have a list of questions and comments that were asked. The NMDOT will include that in a meeting summary, along with the presentation, and this will be accessible for review on the NMDOT website.
- Why can't BNSF stop trains further west instead of blocking Jarales?
 - BNSF requires the full utility of all the track that we have at this location to accommodate our operations. Stopping to the west will not allow for the full use of the area.
- Has there been a study of homelessness increase or decrease in regards to railroad bridge projects?
 - We have not done the analysis yet, but we will be looking at social and economic impacts as part of the environmental analysis. This will involve questions such as: does the project divide the community and what are the economic impacts to property owners? The specific question of homelessness has not been looked at and we may not be able to find meaningful data on the question. However, we will look at environmental justice and economic and social impacts.
 - In this instance, the property spanned by the bridge is BNSF. With their operations, they would have security to address homelessness.
 - BNSF has a robust security standard. They have a resource protection force to patrol the property but are not responsible for ensuring there are no homeless people in the project area at all times.
 - The NMDOT has a process to ensure fair compensation for property owners and that they have an opportunity to participate in this process.
- Have you spoken to homeowners in affected areas?
 - We will be doing that throughout preliminary design and the environmental process. There is a formal and structured process to go through when DOT acquires ROW so that the process is fair, but outreach will be ongoing.
- Can the presentation be shared with Valencia County because of the difficulties from earlier tonight?
 - Yes, we will send the presentation to Valencia County so it can be posted on your website.
- Will you be sharing and emailing copies of this presentation?
 - It will be available at the NMDOT website under "current projects."
- I live at the end of the project area, just north of the track and was wondering how much distance there will be between the wall and the end of the bridge?
 - The abutment will be approximately 40 ft in width.
 - The Alternative C retaining wall on west side of the alignment will run 900-1,000 feet from the end of the bridge to the north and then again to the south.

A post-meeting comment period extended to September 1, 2020. During the comment period, the following comments were received. Copies of the emails (with contact information covered to protect privacy) are attached.

- Due to the use of the road as a major route for farming and ranching activities, as well as emergency response and other uses, it is important that this long overdue project be expedited.
- Concerns with adding additional tracks and what type of effects vibration may have to local residences in terms of structural and electrical damage.
- Concerns with how the overpass, and associated railroad track extension, will impact rural lifestyles of the area.
- Concerns about how the project would affect plans to build a residence in the affected area.
- Questions about how the proposed grade separation would accommodate bicycles and farm equipment as well as how related track construction could increase the amount of farm equipment using Jarales Road.
- An inquiry about available construction employment.
- Concerns about the environmental and safety impacts associated with the expansion of the BNSF railroad tracks, including:
 - Potential well water contamination
 - Potential vibration impacts to historic buildings
 - Potential for diminished air quality
 - Potential light pollution
 - Potential noise pollution
 - Potential exposure to toxic chemicals
 - Potential temperature rise due to additional trains idling and moving through the area
- Additional worries about potential environmental impacts related to expanding the rail service in the area.
- Support for the project.
- Support for Alternative D.

Public Comment Period Notifications:

Newspaper Advertisement

Social Media Posting

Local gyms eye cautiously relaunching fitness classes

From PAGE A1

line regulations to make them easier for businesses to comply with — center COO Cathy Driscoll said they were ready to act.

“We’ve been prepared since we closed (early in the pandemic) to reestablish our fitness classes when it was allowed,” Driscoll said. “We’re calling back our staff and confirming who can still teach what, because ... it’s been months.”

To group or not

Proprietors of some gyms and fitness centers are ready to forge ahead with the new order in hand.

The Jewish Community Center’s gym has been open at a limited capacity for some time — and while some instructors were already back in the center Monday night, Driscoll said Thursday is the official first day of group fitness classes again. There have been adjustments, of course — a strict new cleaning regimen, the removal of some equipment, temperature checks and more.

Defined Fitness — which before the pandemic was running some 700 classes weekly at its seven New Mexico locations — is preparing to announce its revised class schedule and rollout timeline later this week, also with a strict new cleaning regimen, according to spokeswoman Maria Lamar.

“We’re really excited to be reopening the group exercise program,” she said. “It’s really the heart of what we do.”

Bill Keleher, owner of The Open Gym Albuquerque at 4200 Wyoming NE, said he plans to take a measured approach back to group classes.

Like many other facilities, The Open Gym has

offered some streamed classes to members in recent months, some of which involved instructors leading the class from the gym itself over Zoom or Facebook.

“With the very small capacity, what we’ll probably do is have a few spaces for members” in the studio, Keleher said Monday.

For other facilities, the way forward isn’t so clear. Heather Smelser, owner of Mi Vida Yoga, said she’s not sure what restarting classes will look like under current restrictions, and plans to go “really slow and cautious.”

“I’m a little confused by the order,” she said. “We’re contemplating doing park yoga, but I know the large group gatherings, to my understanding, are (limited to) no more than five right now. ... I’m going to take a day or two to really sit down and think about how I’m going to move forward.”

Meanwhile, Aaron Bubbico, owner of CrossFit Albuquerque, isn’t planning to bring back traditional group classes at all in the near future.

Bubbico said when fitness centers reopened at the beginning of June, he restyled his facility at 6501 Eagle Rock NE to an open gym format and started taking reservations. While he said there may be some sort of group instruction going forward, he’s not looking to get back to the classic CrossFit class format — because “if it’s not broken, we’re not going to fix it.”

“We’re kind of going to keep on doing what we’re doing because it’s working,” Bubbico said. “We still have to social distance. We still have to have masks. It kind of makes running a group CrossFit class ... chaotic.”

Bubbico, who during the shutdown loaned out

his gym’s equipment to members, said he’s seen about 90% to 95% retention during the crisis — which he attributes to CrossFit members’ sense of community and a lot of hard work early on in the pandemic.

Finances a struggle

Some other facilities haven’t been as fortunate. “Honestly, I was just getting ready to close down the studio and shut down the business” before learning Friday about the change to the public health order,” said Smelser, a sole proprietor and single mother who started the studio at 2418 Juan Tabo NE nearly seven years ago after leaving a career as a corporate accountant. “... (Now) we’re going to give it a try.”

The income Smelser is taking in from the 15 or so virtual classes she’s offering each week isn’t enough to cover her fixed costs — which means she’s looking at having to adjust her prices going forward. Smelser said she knows she’s not alone.

“There’s some beautiful, beautiful small gyms here that are really about ready to have to close,” she said. “... It is concerning.”

The Jewish Community Center has had to cancel a number of its offerings this year — including its summer camp and swim team.

“We are really running a deficit,” Prant said. “Right now, you know, we’re just squeaking by with the bare minimum.”

Meanwhile, members of some facilities are either putting their memberships on hold or canceling outright.

Keleher of The Open Gym said he understands that some of his members’ lives, too, are in flux.

“This is tough times for so many people,” he said.

State eases off some health restrictions for disabled

From PAGE A1

on to a recently sent letter to the governor requesting the restrictions be relaxed, saying individuals, many with past trauma, were being “isolated from the people who care about them the most.”

During a news conference last week, Lujan Grisham described group-living homes as high-risk settings for coronavirus outbreaks given the proximity of residents.

But she said the state was working to address families’ concerns, while referring to her sister Kimberly, who was disabled and died at age 21.

“We also believe that the emotional and physical health consequences of not being able to provide some relief to both leaving your residence and having visitors has to be addressed,” the governor said in response to a Journal question.

However, the top medical official in her administration, Human Services Secretary David Scrase, called it a difficult deci-

sion to relax restrictions, noting the state’s seven-day rolling average of new COVID-19 cases reached a record high last week.

“We understand the perception is we’re exercising too much caution,” Scrase said.

New Mexico’s state-run developmental disabilities programs — there are two programs that are both largely funded by federal Medicaid dollars — currently provide services to about 4,800 individuals and their families, though thousands more are on a waiting list to join the program.

Those enrolled in the programs qualify for a range of services — from physical and speech therapy to respite care for parents and guardians.

The developmental disability services are known as a “waiver” program. That’s because the federal government, for states including New Mexico, has waived the requirement that help be provided in a nursing home or other type of institutional setting.

That allows families

and guardians of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to decide whether they should live at home, semi-independently or in group homes.

As of last week, a total of 551 individuals enrolled in New Mexico’s developmental disabilities programs had been tested for the coronavirus, according to a memo sent by an acting DOH deputy secretary.

Of that amount, 25 had tested positive and seven have died.

Stafford acknowledged Monday the lockdown on group homes and limited services had proven successful in preventing virus outbreaks, like those seen in some nursing home settings, despite its unintended consequences.

As a result, she said that families will be advised to be cautious and abide by state guidelines — including wearing face masks and social distancing — when visiting family members.

“We all have to be so careful, because the threats are real,” she said.

Trump looks at stopping evictions, other issues

BY ERICA WERNER, JEFF STEIN AND KAROUN DEMIRJIAN
THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Monday he’s looking at unilaterally taking steps to stop tenant evictions and that such a plan might be necessary if a deal for a new coronavirus relief bill is not reached.

“A lot of people are going to be evicted, but I’m going to stop it ...,” Trump told reporters at the White House. “I have a lot of powers with respect to executive orders, and we’re looking at that very seriously right now.” He did not

specify what those powers were.

Trump’s comments came after The Washington Post reported that his administration was eyeing steps it could take without Congress if no deal is reached. Internal planning is a reflection of some officials’ pessimistic outlook for talks with congressional Democrats.

Pressure is increasing for a bill after expanded federal unemployment benefits expired for about 30 million workers on Friday and a moratorium on housing evictions also expired recently.

Trump spoke as the lat-

est round of negotiations was underway in the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. The meeting with Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows lasted about two hours.

The group has met nearly daily for the past week, with limited progress. Democrats are holding out for a wide-ranging \$3 trillion bill, while Trump administration officials had been pushing a short-term fix for unemployment benefits, evictions and a few other issues.

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Public Meeting for the Proposed



Jarales Road (NM 109) and

Railroad Grade Separation, Project CN A302220



The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), in cooperation with the BNSF Railway (BNSF), will hold a virtual public meeting to discuss a proposed highway-rail grade separation of Jarales Road (NM109) between Trujillo Rd and Camino De Crystal. The project would include realignment of Jarales Road, a grade separation structure, and new frontage road access. Additional project information can be viewed at the following: <https://dot.state.nm.us/nmdot/projects>

The NMDOT cannot hold in-person public meetings under the current COVID-19 restrictions. For this reason, we are holding a **virtual public meeting** on Tuesday, August 18th 6:30PM – 8:30PM
You may attend the virtual public meeting via telephone at 1-877-229-8493, ID code 119649 or Participate online at access.live/nmdot



The purpose of the virtual meeting is to present the project purpose and need, alternatives considered, the preferred alternative, funding, and the project schedule. A narrated PowerPoint presentation will be given, followed by a public comment/question-and-answer period. Project representatives will be available to address questions and discuss the proposed improvements.

The purpose of the project is to provide a safe, uninterrupted route for pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic across the railroad corridor that accommodates current and future rail operations. The specific **need for the project** is to address critical conditions at the current crossing including physical deficiencies, safety, travel congestion, and system connectivity. Public input for the proposed project will be accepted through Tuesday, September 1, 2020. Please send comments to:

Jeff Fredine, c/o Parametrix
9600 San Mateo Blvd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
Jarales@parametrix.com

If you have questions and/or you are unable to attend the public meeting, please contact Priscilla Benavides, NMDOT, (505) 250-8760, Priscilla.Benavides@state.nm.us

13 apply to be the next city manager in Belen; interviews

By Clara Garcia
News-Bulletin Editor

BELÉN

A retired Army general, a former newspaper publisher and an environmental health specialist are three of the 13 people who have applied to be the next Belen city manager.

The position became available after Andrew DiCamillo resigned in June after only six months on the job. DiCamillo, who was appointed in January by Mayor Jerah Cordova, left the position after resigning because he couldn't work remotely from his home in Aztec.

According to the advertisement for applicants, the city will pay the next city manager a base salary of \$95,000. Some of the qualifications include a bachelor's degree, five years in manager and finance operations and willingness to relocate to Valencia County.

The applicants are:
•Randall Camp, of Alto, N.M., is a senior project manager for King Industry, and directs and manages FEMA recovery projects for municipalities and counties.

He has also been the public works director in Helena, Mont., and in Ruidoso. He has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering

from the University of Alabama.

•Raul Candelaria, of Albuquerque, is a business management contractor for Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, and was a clerk/treasurer for the village of Tijeras.

He has a master's degree in arts communication and leadership studies from Gonzaga University, and a master's in public policy from Harvard University.

•Weston Davis, of El Campo, Texas, is currently the EMS director in the city of El Campo. He was previously been the clinical manager for the city of Pearland, and a paramedic with several agencies.

He has a master's degree in public administration from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and a bachelor's degree in emergency management administration.

•Sam Demel, of Newton, Kan., is an account manager for the Kansas Corporation Commission. He was also a community and organization specialist with the community Engagement Institute at Wichita State University.

He holds both a master's and bachelor's degree in public administration.

•Leisa Haynes, who was recently terminated as the city manager in Rio Communities after a year of employment, also applied for

the position in Belen.

Haynes was previously the city manager in Mangum, Okla., and assistant to the city manager in Tuttle, Okla. She has a master's degree in public administration, and a bachelor's degree in communications.

•Darcy Long, of Galdstone, Mich., disclosed he was fired from his position as city manager in Aug. 2019, saying he was not a "fit for this organization or community" and the city had fired its last three to four managers.

Long was also the town manager of Markel, Ind., city manager in Brown City, Mich., and in Booker, Texas. He has a master's degree in public administration from Northern Michigan University.

•Angelique Maldonado, of Belen, is an environmental health supervisor for the City of Albuquerque, and worked in various positions, including water use compliance supervisor for ABC Water Utility Authority in Albuquerque.

She has a bachelor's degree in environmental science, and a master's degree in community and regional planning.

•Martin Moore, of Batavia, N.Y., was the city manager of that town until June 20. He is an adjunct professor at the College of Rockport, where he teaches cyber

security.

He holds a PhD. in political science and public administration from Northern Arizona University.

•Dave Puadu, of Rio Communities, is currently a publishing and non-publishing consultant, was publisher at the Los Alamos Monitor and for Number Nine Media, Inc., which owns the *Valencia County News-Bulletin* and *El Defensor Chieftain* in Socorro.

He holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Nebraska.

•Christopher Saindon, of El Paso, Texas, is an assistant director of field operations with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. He previously was the deputy director with the U.S. Army Fire Center of Excellence at Fort Sill, Okla., and retired from the U.S. Army after 24 years of service.

He has a master's degree in arts national security studies from American Military University.

•Andrew Salas, of Bernardo, is a retired brigadier general of the New Mexico National Guard, and was the chief executive officer with the Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc. He is currently a candidate for the Socorro County Commission District 2 position, a seat that is currently held by his wife, Martha.

He has a master's degree in governmental studies and international relations from the Naval Post Graduate School.

•John Schempf, of Apache Junction, Ariz., is the executive director of the Supersition Mountain Museum. He was the city manager of the city of Colfax, Calif., and town manager in Clifton, Ariz, and South Berwick, Maine.

He holds a master's degree in strategic planning, and a bachelor's degree in economics, political science and geography from Dartmouth College.

•William Smith, of Neocho, Mo., is a consultant with MSCG., Inc., in Landham, Maryland; was chief executive officer for Regional Health Care Affiliates in Providence, Ken.; and director at the Kentucky Health Center Network. He also worked as the city administrator in Park Rapids, Minn.

He served in the U.S. Air Force, and has a bachelor's degree in commerce from the University of Louisville.

Belen Mayor Jerah Cordova said he has reviewed the applications, and hopes to start interviewing candidates next week.

Entries sought for Yard/Garden of Month

As a way to reward the efforts of local gardeners and to make the community more beautiful the Valencia County Extension Master Gardeners and the *Valencia County News-Bulletin* are accepting nominations for Yard and Garden of the month for August until Aug. 14.

Nominations may be made of any yard or garden in Valencia County with the winner receiving a \$100 prize and photos of the winning yard also will appear in the *News-Bulletin*.

The deadline for this month's contest is Friday, Aug. 14, and the winner will be announced in the Aug. 20 *News-Bulletin*.

"Because we are at the height of the summer growing season, this month we are hoping to

get nominations of vegetable gardens and the like," said Merlinda Acevedo, president of the Valencia County Master Gardeners. "We, of course, will still accept entries of beautifully landscaped and maintained yards as we have in the past."

Nominations must include:

- The name and telephone number of the yard/garden owner;
- The address of where the yard/garden is located (all nominated yards/gardens must be in Valencia County);
- A brief statement of why the yard/garden deserves the award;
- Nominations are due by noon, Friday, Aug. 14, and must be submitted via email to either

Rigo Chavez at chavrf66@gmail.com or Merlinda Acevedo at mercruz_2000@yahoo.com;

• Nominators may also submit up to two photos of the nominated yard/garden via email.

• Judges from the Valencia County Master Gardeners will visit gardens/yards the weekend of Aug. 14.

The Valencia County Master Gardeners is a community service program of the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service and provides courses and information to help community members improve their gardening skills.

TAX HOLIDAY

New Mexico's annual Back-to-School Gross Receipts Tax Holiday begins at 12:01 a.m., Friday, Aug. 7, and continues through midnight on Sunday, Aug. 9.

During that time, the state allows merchants to deduct gross receipts taxes on a variety of merchandise, allowing shoppers to purchase many items tax free.

"This weekend's tax holiday helps make back-to-school expenses a little more manageable," said Taxation and Revenue Department Secretary Stephanie Schardin Clarke. "Of course, this year is different than any other, and back-to-school school needs may be different than in years past. If you do decide to go shopping in person this weekend, mask up and minimize the number of people shop-

ping to keep your family and our entire community safe."

While there are restrictions as to what qualifies for the tax holiday, merchants often absorb the tax on some non-qualifying items.

Among the merchandise that can be sold tax-free this weekend are clothing and shoes priced at less than \$100 per unit, computers priced under \$1,000 and related computer hardware priced under \$500. School supplies under \$30 per unit for use in standard, general-education classrooms also qualify.

More information is available in FYI 203 at tax.newmexico.gov by using the "Forms and Publications" menu, opening the "Publications" folder and then the "FYIs" folder.



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LOCAL CONFIDENCE

Public Meeting for the Proposed Jarales Road (NM 109) and Railroad Grade Separation, Project CN A302220

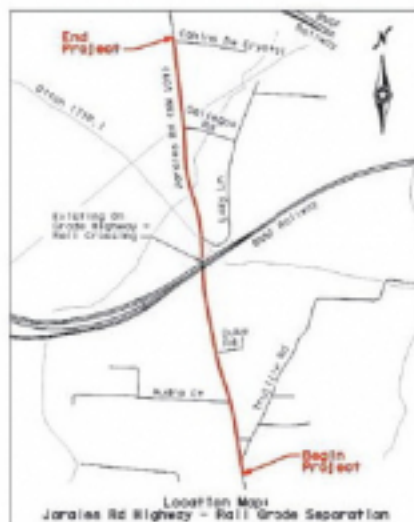
The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), in cooperation with the BNSF Railway (BNSF), will hold a virtual public meeting to discuss a proposed highway-rail grade separation of Jarales Road (NM109) between Trujillo Rd and Camino De Crystal. The project would include realignment of Jarales Road, a grade separation structure, and new frontage road access. Additional project information can be viewed at the following: <https://dot.state.nm.us/nmdot/projects>

The NMDOT cannot hold in-person public meetings under the

current COVID-19 restrictions. For this reason, we are holding a
virtual public meeting on Tuesday, August 18th 6:30PM – 8:30PM

You may attend the virtual public meeting via telephone at

1-877-229-8493, ID code 119649 or Participate online at access.live/nmdot



The purpose of the virtual meeting is to present the project purpose and need, alternatives considered, the preferred alternative, funding, and the project schedule. A narrated PowerPoint presentation will be given, followed by a public comment/question-and-answer period. Project representatives will be available to address questions and discuss the proposed improvements.

The purpose of the project is to provide a safe, uninterrupted route for pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic across the railroad corridor that accommodates current and future rail operations. The specific need for the project is to address critical conditions at the current crossing including physical deficiencies, safety, travel congestion, and system connectivity.

Public input for the proposed project will be accepted through Tuesday, September 1, 2020. Please send comments to:

Jeff Fredline, c/o Parametrix
9600 San Mateo Blvd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
Jarales@parametrix.com

If you have questions and/or you are unable to attend the public meeting, please contact Priscilla Benavides, NMDOT, (505) 250-8760,

Priscilla.Benavides@state.nm.us

12

AUG 12 AT 8:15 AM – AUG 18 AT 8:30 PM

Public Meeting for the Proposed Jarales Road (N.M. 109) and Railroad Grade Separation. Project CN...

Online Event

Event Ended

About Discussion

Interested

Going



Details

6 people responded

Aug 12 at 8:15 AM – Aug 18 at 8:30 PM

Public · Hosted by NMDOT

Online Event
<https://dot.state.nm.us/nmdotprojects>

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0
WENT

6
INTERESTED

Popular With Friends



SAT, OCT 3 AT 10 AM
Harold Pope for SD23 - Day of ACTION!

Ventana Ranch Park
 Victor

Interested



TUE, SEP 22 - SEP 27
Albuquerque Film & Music Experience

Albuquerque
 Alexa

Interested




SAT, OCT 3 AT 12 PM
Albuquerque Drive-Through Grab & Go Local Artisan Market Edition

Explora
 Alexa

Interested



SUN, OCT 18 AT 8 AM
ABQ CiQlovía 2020

 Victor and Alexa

Interested

Public Comments Received and Responses

Private email addresses and contact information
are blocked for privacy reasons

Jeff Fredine

From:
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 2:39 PM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Subject: BNSF Railroad Crossing highway 109 of Jarales Road

Alternative D is the most sensible way to go due to only taking out three structures out on the south side of the construction sight. You don't have to move Gas lines Electric polls fiberoptic lines.

Also you don't have to destroy housing and rerouting road so close to homes.

You can use the main road for cars and construction units for the time been untill project D is done.

The BNSF is not going to you'd the property do west of highway 109

All there is is vacant property on BNSF property and it is a fire hazard.

That is the cheapest way to make a highway and bridge it doesn't take a engineer to figure that out.

Unless you live in a box witch engineers do. Why because I have a Engineer degree from New Mexico State University.

Dirt work and pavement is cheaper to reroute the same distance than buying out home structures.

That shouldn't cost 25 million dollars to do so.

Remember you are wanting to build over and through the first township witch is The town of Jarales and not just a road. The city of Belen came in second and moved twice.

I know the existing railroad track that is there now was a bypass for the ice plant to put ice in the trains

The old rip track just south of the main line is the original rail into the terminal which is the roundhouse.

So do the right thing and consider alternative D and go around.

Jeff Fredine

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2020 2:49 PM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Subject: Greetings from 519 Jarales Rd | Jarales railroad bridge project

Hello Jeff- I hope all is well

I am Ricoh Sanchez and reside on [REDACTED]

I am excited to hear that you all will be moving forward with the bridge project here in Jarales. Long overdue to say the least. Anyhow, I along with my family, own 4 residential properties which seem to be impacted by Alt C, the preferred design. This is bitter sweet as we love the land we own however we certainly would not want to interfere with the well needed project and/nor live right next to such a BIG bridge.

I understand that on Sept. 1st, a formal decision will be made. At that point we will have a better understanding of what to expect in which we can proceed with next steps.

Anyhow for now I am pleased to introduce myself to you and look forward to working with you in the future. If you wouldn't mind, could you please confirm the alternative picked (when known) in case I am unable to obtain this information? This will continue our communication, if indeed, I am impacted. Also, seems to be some confusion in my neighbourhood as people have different ideas of what may or may not come to past. I'm just trying to stay ahead of the curb as me and 2 other close families all reside on 519 Jarales road at this time. We will need adequate time to prepare for such a move.

Thanks for your time and please feel free to reach out to me anytime. Thank you and God bless

[REDACTED]

Ricoh A. Sanchez

[REDACTED]

Jeff Fredine

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 23, 2020 5:38 PM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Attachments: [REDACTED]

I was unable to attend this week's virtual public meeting for Jarales but would like to go on record with my concerns regarding the increased train traffic. Currently trains are being parked on the tracks impeding traffic for up to two hours while BNSF fuels their engines on the tracks. The delays are excessive and I'm concerned with BNSF's upcoming project to increase the number of tracks will only cause further delay and negative impact to the community. What entity will assist us in protecting our community from potential contamination to our ground water and our irrigation ditches. We are a community of farmers who rely on clean water and the threat of additional train traffic only compounds that the threat. What is BNSF doing to ensure their operation will not negatively harm our community. Just a start but I believe I summarized your concerns. I can not send this in, but please cut and paste into an email from you to the email address provided. This is a start. Thanks

T-Mobile

This message was sent to you by a T-Mobile wireless phone.

Jeff Fredine

From: Mary Anderson [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2020 9:45 AM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project; Mary Anderson; Pricilla.Benavides@state.nm.us
Subject: Jarales Project

On Sun, Aug 23, 2020 at 2:20 PM Mary Anderson [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Sir or Madame at BNSF,

I attended the Virtual and Gil Sanchez Elementary School CN A302220 Project meeting. Our homes are [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. They are about the closest in proximity to the new proposed, additional 8 rail road tracks. We DO NOT want to stand in the way of profitable progress of BNSF and local population. We DO have concerns about the environmental safety of the proposed addition of 8 tracks East of Belen Rail Yard. Our pollution concerns are...

1. Will our water wells be contaminated due to overspill of diesel and oil?
2. Will the seismic vibrations of waiting idling engines and moving trains destroy the integrity or crack the 1 1/2 feet thick adobe walls of our family's home?
3. Will pure country air quality change to the stench of emissions of diesel and other chemicals? Are we condemned to asthma or other respiratory conditions?
4. Will the extra artificial light installation on 8 tracks abolish our starry night sky, farm animals and family garden? We have already accepted the bridge will permanently block our sunset.
5. Will the 24 hour sound pollution of idling and moving trains increase dramatically? We currently open windows at night for ventilation. What deafening sounds and pungent smells shall we expect? Lack of sleep has coronary heart disease risks.
6. What exposure will our family have due to toxic chemicals being transported?
7. Will area temperature rise due to additional heat generated by idling and moving trains?

Have you looked at the various studies of the health impact rail yards have on general public? Why wouldn't the the 8 tracks be built, just east of Rio Grande Bridge, at the unpopulated Belen Industrial Park?

We worry our much beloved, multigenerational, country, peaceful, sentimental, refuge of 11 acre's land value will plummet and grandchildren's inheritance will diminish by transforming into a contaminated landfill.

Respectfully awaiting your response,

Mary Benavidez Anderson, Linda Lou Benavidez Sanchez(Families who LOVE our inherited "patria" at [REDACTED] [REDACTED])

Jeff Fredine

From: Black, Jacob [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2020 12:46 PM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Subject: Available Candidates

Hi There,

I don't know whether you are the right person for this, so, I am hoping you can point me in the right direction. I saw on the Internet that you have some open positions within your company, and I have some candidates that may interest you. It doesn't cost anything to look at resumes, so please let me know if I should send them to you or to someone else.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards
Jacob Black | Talent Acquisition Manager

[REDACTED]

Jeff Fredine

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, August 26, 2020 11:01 AM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Subject: comments grade separation project A302220

My name is Karen Springstead and I reside at [REDACTED] Jarales NM. I joined the Meeting on Aug 18th, 2020. I rarely use the Jarales road crossing because it is usually blocked, but along with many neighbors will use this route when the bridge is completed. My concerns are as follows:

1. Will the actual road space accommodate the new large farm equipment that does not fit on Jarales road now? With the lack of visibility will I meet a tractor on the crest of the bridge and have no space to move over?
2. There was mention of a bike path. Is it to be on both sides? Will it be separated from the cars by a barrier? If so that may cause additional problems to the concern I have as 1. I am all for a bike path just don't want the bridge too narrow to accommodate all the future needs of this rural community.
3. No mention was made about additional track construction on the North South Line. That will greatly impact the level of traffic on Jarales road. Even more farm equipment will need to use the new bridge.

My phone # is [REDACTED] [Leave a message](#)

Jeff Fredine

From: Naeomi Trujillo [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, August 27, 2020 9:35 PM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Subject: Corner of Audra Ct

Hello

We got a letter about the surveying going to be conducted for the Jarales bridge. Our property is the empty lot on the corner of [REDACTED] (approx. 3 acres). We are looking into building a house on this property. We need to know (if possible) if our property will be affected in any way.

Thank you in advance for your response.

Respectfully

Esequiel/Naeomi Trujillo
[REDACTED]

Jeff Fredine

From: Francine Baca [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 31, 2020 11:16 AM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Subject: attn Jeff Fredline Jarales Bridge project

Hello our name is Francine and Christopher Baca we live at [REDACTED]. Currently we feel the vibration from the trains as well have some issues with some electrical issues that come from the current vibrations of the trains. Our concern is adding additional tracks. We are worried that our home foundation will suffer if not now but later on. Constant vibration will eventually see an effect. Will we be covered as far as damage?? As far as we see our home will not be affected by the bridge itself but are definitely concerned about the increase in tracks.

Francine Baca
Christopher Baca

Jeff Fredine

From: Eugene Pickett [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 4:49 PM
To: Jarales Road Overpass Project
Cc: Priscilla.Benavides@state.nm.us; Mosher, Jill, NMDOT; Eric.Chavez@mail.house.gov; Charles D. Sharp; Rudy Arredondo; Rural Coalition; Jaime Chavez; Pam Roy; Zoey Fink; Lopez, Richard - FSA, Albuquerque, NM
Subject: Comments Proposed Jarales Rd NM 109

As a long time resident of the Jarales/ Pueblitos area I have attended and participated in all of the meetings held regarding this issue. Although my property is West of the immediate area to be impacted, what does take place on either side of the tracks has an effect. In 2017 we had a major flood in Pueblitos and the only access road into Pueblitos was through the Jarales juncture. For several weeks the use of the Jarales Road for any purpose including emergencies was our only option. The time table as well as an environmental impact statement should have an established timeline. That timeline should now have projected purchases options for the residents directly impacted in addition the dates for proposed construction.

Due to the use of the road as a major route for Farming and Ranching activities it is of the utmost importance that this long over due project have a defined and expedited proforma.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Eugene Pickett
Black Farmers and Ranchers New Mexico



Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

NM Highway 109 (Jarales Rd) and Railroad Grade Separation Project

<https://dot.state.nm.us/content/nmdot/en/ProjectsD3.html#A302220>

Project Contact:

Priscilla Benavides

NMDOT Central Region Design Manager

Cell: (505) 250-8760

Jarales@parametrix.com(Attn:Jeff Fredine)

Cc: Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham

Howie Morales, Lieutenant Governor of the State of New Mexico

Deb Haaland, New Mexico, U.S. Representative

Alicia Keyes, Cabinet Secretary for Economic Development Department

James Kenney, Cabinet Secretary for Environment Department

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter. For so many years the Jarales community has been united. Now this build a bridge issue has caused controversy and division amongst our community. This controversy saddens my heart! It seems they are two people causing all the controversy. If they want a bridge, build it on their property. She has two roads prior to crossing the Railroad (Castillo Road on the north and Mill Road on the south side) of her property that will take her directly into Belen. Also, he who lives 3 mile south of the railroad crossing has the same access to those roads. During a conversation with them I asked them if this were your property would you sell your property to the railroad. Their answer was "No!" Well who's property value would go up THEIRS! They are not directly impacted by this bridge which means they will still have their land, homes and continue to build memories which we sadly will not! They do not speak for ALL the Jarales community! Please go door to door and talk to each property owner that will be directly impacted by this bridge and listen to their voice! Yes, I heard there were two meetings one at Gil Sanchez and one virtual. Many property owners that will be directly impacted were not contacted about these meetings, nor received a letter informing them they were scheduled.

For so many years the Jarales community has had such a rural rich community culture. With acequias with clean water that doesn't have diesel fuel in it yet, which water our alfalfa, corn, chile fields where birds migrate and feed from, like whopping cranes (which is a NM endangered species), pheasants, roadrunners, wood peckers and other wild animals like jack rabbit, skunks, squirrels, lizards, raccoons. too many to mention. We also have our livestock cows, horses, sheep, donkeys, pigs, chickens, and other farm animals.

The people of Jarales have built so many beautiful homes choosing to live here. When I wake up in the morning, I hear the birds sing, which will probably not happen with the bridge and the extension of

EIGHT TRACKS. The Railroad has not asked permission of the Jarales community about the extension. I remember when we only had one track that they would use, now there are three! I believe what BNSF is thinking we will give them their bridge and extend our number of tracks. That is not what the people of Jarales want! We love our rural rich culture. No one has talked to the people directly impacted by this. We are the ones losing our homes and property and the memories we would like to build with our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. We are directly impacted by this bridges no matter which map the Railroad chooses. It will directly impact us either with a turnabout or by taking our land. PLEASE, let us continue with our rural community and do not destroy our rural culture. To us this property is worth so much more than gold! These children are our future! maybe your future doctor, lawyer, president, or your boss we are your stakeholders!

The Benavidez, and Sanchez Family