



August 2, 2023

Jerry Valdez
Executive Director
New Mexico Department of Transportation
Delivery Via Email (Jerry.Valdez@dot.nm.gov)

**Subject: Letter of Recommendation and Support for the Evaluation of and Public Safety
Improvements to New Mexico Route 554**

Dear Mr. Valdez,

Based on New Mexico Commission Policy 68 (03/15/2018), Regional Transportation Planning Organizations are to identify local transportation needs and incorporate rural transportation needs in the statewide transportation planning process.

In the spirit of coordination and cooperation, I am writing to recommend and support a New Mexico Department of Transportation evaluation of the safety of New Mexico Route 554, between the Abiquiu Rural Events Center and the outskirts of El Rito. The Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NPRTPO) recommends inclusion of this road in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to make improvements that will increase the safety for those who travel this corridor.

At a recent NPRTPO meeting, community members from the region raised the following concerns:

- Conflicts between bicyclists and motorists due to speed differences
- Lack of shoulder in case of need to pull over with a flat tire or other purposes
- General age and lack of maintenance of the road
- Many people commute to the clinic, particularly the dental clinic, from as far as Santa Fe and Tierra Amarilla; several providers have been in serious crashes during their commutes
- Difficulty getting out of Prado Valley Ranch development and onto 554, due to the speed of traffic on the road and limited visibility
- Limited visibility in general, due to blind hills and curves
- Concerns for wildlife collisions, particularly at dusk and at night

Community members also proposed a range of corridor improvements, including:

- Clear trees and foliage to the edge of right-of-way to increase visibility
- Additional speed limit signs throughout the length of NM554
- New paving and striping
- Additional signage at blind hills and sharp curves

- Widening the road
- Addition of shoulders and delineators
- Addition of bike lanes and signage
- Addition of passing lanes and signage

Members of the Northern Pueblos RTPO request a Road Safety Audit (RSA) on the corridor to identify and scope improvements, and that subsequent project(s) identified from such an RSA are added into the STIP. Additionally, NPRTPO would appreciate periodic updates on corridor evaluations and improvement plans for this and other roads in the region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Vernon G. Lujan, MPA
Northern Pueblos RTPO Chair

CC: Jason Coffey, Technical Unit Supervisor, Multimodal Planning & Programs Bureau, NMDOT