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[TRIP Reports: The Top 50 Transportation Projects to Support Economic Growth and Quality of Life in New Mexico](#)

Published on August 29, 2013 [Daily Dirt](#), [National](#) and [Rocky Mountain Construction](#).



New Report Identifies New Mexico's 50 Most Needed Transportation Projects For Economic Growth; Projects Would Improve, Modernize And Expand Road And Transit Systems To Support And Grow The State's Economy

In order to adequately support New Mexico's existing industries and provide for additional economic growth, the state will need to make numerous improvements to its surface transportation system. This is according to a new report released today by [TRIP](#), a Washington, DC based national transportation research organization.

TRIP's report, "[The Top 50 Surface Transportation Projects to Support Economic Growth and Quality of Life in New Mexico](#)," identifies and ranks the projects needed to provide New Mexico with a transportation system that can support the increased movement of people, goods and resources throughout the state. The most needed surface transportation improvements in New Mexico include projects to build, expand or modernize highways or bridges, projects to improve rail or public transportation, and multi-modal projects. These improvements would enhance economic development opportunities throughout the state by increasing mobility and freight movement, easing congestion, and making New Mexico an attractive place to live, visit and do business.

According to the TRIP report, the most needed projects for the state's economic growth are as follows

1. **US 491 expansion to four lanes from Twin Lakes to Naschitti**
2. **Reconstruction of US 64 from Farmington to McGee Park.**
3. **Reconstruction of I-25 Gibson, Cesar Chavez and Lead/Coal Interchanges.**
4. **Adding two lanes to US 82 from Artesia to Lovington.**
5. **Reconstruction of the Comanche, Montgomery, Jefferson, San Mateo and San Antonio I-25 Interchanges.**
6. **Reconstruction and rehabilitation of NM 68 in Espanola.**
7. **Construction of Central Corridor Bus Rapid Transit in Albuquerque.**
8. **Addition of a third lane on I-25 between the Rio Bravo and Broadway Interchanges.**
9. **Construction of a new four-lane roadway with bike and pedestrian amenities over the Animas River in Farmington.**
10. **Construction of a new river crossing from I-25 to NM 47 in Valencia County.**

A full list of needed projects, descriptions and their impact on economic development can be found in the [appendix](#) of the report. TRIP ranked each transportation project based on a rating system that considered the following: short-term economic benefits, including job creation; the level of improvement in the condition of the transportation facility, including safety improvements; the degree of improvement in access and mobility; and the long-term improvement provided in regional or state economic performance and competitiveness.

"New Mexico's highways and bridges form a vital statewide transportation network, which is essential not only in supporting a healthy economy for our state, but also in providing safe, reliable access to homes, schools, healthcare, shopping and recreation," said Mike Beck, executive director of the Associated Contractors of New Mexico. "In order to protect the investment already made in our surface transportation system, we must not fall behind in our efforts to enhance and expand that system."

Enhancing critical segments of New Mexico's surface transportation system will boost the state's economy in the short-term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long term these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth, improving the quality of life for the state's residents and visitors.

Sustaining New Mexico's long-term economic growth and maintaining the state's high quality of life will require increased investment in expanding the capacity of the state's surface transportation system, which will enhance business productivity and support short- and long-term job creation in the state.

"Increasing investment in New Mexico's transportation network of roads, bridges and transit is vital to boosting the state's economy and the quality of life of its residents," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "In the short term, transportation investment creates good jobs, but the long-term benefits of an efficient transportation system connecting New Mexico's residents, communities and businesses can span generations. If state and federal lawmakers fail to provide adequate transportation funding, New Mexico and the nation will lose their competitive edge and the state's transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and gridlocked."

Executive Summary

New Mexico's transportation system has played a significant role in the state's development, providing mobility and access for residents, visitors, businesses and industry. The state's roads, highways, rails and public transit systems remain the backbone of the Land of Enchantment's economy. New Mexico's transportation system also provides for a high quality of life and makes the state a desirable place to live and visit. The condition and quality of its transportation system will play a critical role in New Mexico's ability to capitalize on its economic advantages and meet the demands of the 21st Century

To achieve sustainable economic growth, New Mexico must proceed with numerous projects to improve key roads, bridges, highways and transit systems. Enhancing critical segments of New Mexico's transportation system will boost the state's economy in the short-term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long-term these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness and improve the quality of life for the state's residents and visitors by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth.

In this report, TRIP examines recent transportation and economic trends in New Mexico and provides information on the transportation projects in the state that are most needed to support economic growth. Sources of data include the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Census Bureau. All data used in the report is the latest available.

TRIP has identified the 50 transportation projects that are most needed to support New Mexico's economic growth. These projects are located throughout the state.

- The most needed transportation improvements in New Mexico include projects to build, expand or modernize roads, highways, bridges and public transit systems throughout the state. These improvements would enhance economic development opportunities throughout the state by increasing mobility and freight movement, easing congestion, and making New Mexico an attractive place to live, visit and do business.
- TRIP evaluated each transportation project based on the following criteria: short-term economic benefits, including job creation; the level of improvement in the condition of the transportation facility, including safety improvements; the degree of improvement in access and mobility; and the long-term improvement provided in regional or state economic performance and competitiveness.
- New Mexico's 10 most needed transportation projects to support economic development in the state as determined by TRIP follow. A list of the top 50 needed projects and descriptions can be found in the [appendix](#).
- **11. US 491 expansion to four lanes from Twin Lakes to Naschitti.** This \$89 million project would widen the remaining 26.8 miles of two-lane roadway to four-lanes. US 491 is the only feasible north-south corridor in the region that will support heavy truck traffic. Completion of this project would allow for more efficient transport of coal, oil and other goods, while enhancing safety and boosting tourism.
- **12. Reconstruction of US 64 from Farmington to McGee Park.** This \$40 million project would reconstruct a four-mile portion of US 64 to provide additional capacity and access management. This project will provide additional capacity and increased safety resulting in improved transportation and economic opportunities in the region.
- **13. Reconstruction of the I-25 Gibson, Cesar Chavez and Lead/Coal Interchanges.** This \$200 million project would eliminate the S-curve on I-25 and reconstruct the I-25 Gibson, Cesar Chavez and Lead/Coal Interchanges. Completion of this project will improve mobility in the area and enhance access to and from the area to the Interstate system.
- **14. Adding two lanes to US 82 from Artesia to Lovington.** This \$95 million project would construct two additional lanes to make a four-lane facility from Artesia to Lovington. Completion of this project will accommodate the increased traffic due to the oil and gas industry in southeastern New Mexico.
- **15. Reconstruction of the Comanche, Montgomery, Jefferson, San Mateo and San Antonio I-25 Interchanges.** This \$125 million project would reconstruct the Comanche, Montgomery, Jefferson, San Mateo and San Antonio Interchanges on I-25 to alleviate congestion and improve mobility on I-25.
- **16. Reconstruction and rehabilitation of NM 68 in Espanola.** This \$70 million project would reconstruct 35 miles of NM 68 to four lanes, with auxiliary lanes along two-lane sections. This corridor serves commuter and recreational traffic in the region. Completion of the project would address operation and safety concerns.
- **17. Construction of a Bus Rapid Transit system in the Central Corridor in Albuquerque.** This project would construct a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along the Central Corridor in Albuquerque, from I-40 and Tramway Boulevard to I-40 and Atrisco Vista. This would include a combination of dedicated busway and mixed flow lanes within the current right-of-way. Central Avenue is a key connector of transit destinations and serves a large part of the transit-dependent population of the city. The institution of a BRT system would create more timely and dependable transit options and would assist in redevelopment of the vacant or underused land along the Corridor.
- **18. Addition of a third lane on I-25 between the Rio Bravo and Broadway Interchanges.** This \$50 million project would add a third lane to five miles of I-25 between the Rio Bravo and Broadway Interchanges to address congestion and improve mobility on I-25.
- **19. Construction of a new four-lane roadway with bike and pedestrian amenities over the Animas River in Farmington.** This \$22 million extension of Pinon Hills Boulevard would create a new river crossing and connect the retail district along East Main St to the developing area of unincorporated San Juan County east of the river. This connection would reduce out-of-direction travel that motorists currently experience. This road extension would help alleviate traffic volumes on the two nearest river crossings at Browning Pkwy and CR 350.
- **20. Construction of a new river crossing in Los Lunas from I-25 to NM 47.** This \$60 million project would construct a new river crossing from I-25 to NM 47 to improve mobility in Valencia County, provide for economic development and ease congestion in the area.

Transportation projects that improve the efficiency, condition or safety of a roadway provide significant economic benefits by reducing transportation delays and costs associated with a deficient transportation system. Some benefits of transportation improvements include the following.

- Improved business competitiveness due to reduced production and distribution costs as a result of increased travel speeds and fewer mobility barriers

- Improvements in household welfare resulting from better access to higher-paying jobs, a wider selection of competitively priced consumer goods, additional housing and healthcare options, and improved mobility for residents without access to private vehicles
- Gains in local, regional and state economies due to improved regional economic competitiveness, which stimulates population and job growth.
- Increased leisure/tourism and business travel resulting from the enhanced condition and reliability of a region's transportation system.
- A reduction in economic losses from vehicle crashes, traffic congestion and vehicle maintenance costs associated with driving on deficient roads.
- Transportation projects that expand roadway capacity produce significant economic benefits by reducing congestion and improving access, thus speeding the flow of people and goods while reducing fuel consumption.
- [Site Selection magazine's 2010 survey](#) of corporate real estate executives found that transportation infrastructure was the third most important selection factor in site location decisions, behind only work force skills and state and local taxes
- A [2007 analysis by the Federal Highway Administration](#) found that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support approximately 27,800 jobs, including approximately 9,400 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.
- The [Federal Highway Administration estimates](#) that each dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements results in an average benefit of \$5.20 in the form of reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, improved safety, reduced road and bridge maintenance costs, and reduced emissions as a result of improved traffic flow.

While New Mexico's diverse economy has been impacted by the recession, the state's transportation system will need to accommodate projected future growth.

- From 1990 to 2012, New Mexico's population increased by 38 percent, from approximately 1.5 million to approximately 2.1 million.
- From 1990 to 2011, annual vehicle-miles-of-travel (VMT) in the state increased by 58 percent, from approximately 16.1 billion VMT to 25.5 billion VMT. Based on travel and population trends, TRIP estimates that vehicle travel in New Mexico will increase another 30 percent by 2030.
- New Mexico's unemployment rate nearly doubled from 3.5 percent in July 2007 to 6.9 percent in July 2013. New Mexico's current unemployment rate is lower than the national average of 7.4 percent in July 2013.
- New Mexico has benefited from a diverse economy, which includes significant employment in the following sectors: oil and gas production, tourism, agriculture, and film and television production.

New Mexico's economy is served by an extensive surface transportation system that has some deficiencies and experiences severe congestion in key areas. Roads carry the majority of freight shipped in the state.

- New Mexico's system of 68,384 miles of roads and 3,924 bridges, maintained by local, state and federal governments, carry 25.5 billion vehicle miles of travel annually.
- Twenty-four percent of New Mexico's major roads are deficient, with nine percent rated in poor condition and an additional 15 percent rated mediocre in 2011. An additional 11 percent of the state's major roads were rated in fair condition and 65 percent were rated in good condition.
- Eight percent of New Mexico's bridges were rated structurally deficient in 2012. A bridge is structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles.
- Every year, approximately \$31.4 billion in goods are shipped annually from sites in New Mexico and another \$46.6 billion in goods are shipped annually to sites in New Mexico, mostly by truck.
- In 2012, nine percent of New Mexico's bridges were rated as functionally obsolete. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.
- Sixty-five percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in New Mexico are carried by trucks and another 18 percent are carried by parcel, U.S. Postal Service, courier services or by multiple modes, which use trucks for part of the deliveries.

Sources of data for this report include the , the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Census Bureau. All data used in the report is the latest available.

Founded in 1971, [TRIP](#)® of Washington, DC, is a nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues. TRIP is sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers; businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction; labor unions; and organizations concerned with efficient and safe surface transportation.