

PUBLIC VIEWS ON TRANSPORTATION:

THE RESULTS OF THE SIX NEW MEXICO CITIZEN CONFERENCES ON TRANSPORTATION

Fall, 1997

Prepared for
New Mexico State Highway
and Transportation Department

by the



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND METHOD

To learn the public's views on long-range transportation planning, the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD) contracted with the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy (IPP) to hold a series of six public meetings called "Citizen Conferences." The conferences were designed to learn what transportation policy the general public would recommend if it had the time and resources necessary to arrive at informed opinions on the issue. At each Citizen Conference, a random sample of New Mexico citizens (called "citizen advisors") spent a morning discussing transportation issues with a panel of transportation experts and activists. The citizen advisors then spent the afternoon talking among themselves and arriving at a set of written policy recommendations, which are summarized in this executive summary.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

The people who attend public meetings usually do not evenly represent the demographics and attitudes of the general public, but the citizens recruited to participate in the Citizen Conferences were a relatively representative sample of the New Mexico public. As discussed in the body of the report, the age, ethnicity, household income, educational level, and political beliefs of the citizen advisors were comparable to the larger New Mexico adult population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The most common view expressed at the conferences was that New Mexico should focus its energy on maintaining the existing network of state highways. As the Gallup citizen advisors said in their recommendations, "We believe that the State of New Mexico should maintain as many of the state roads as possible through resurfacing and repairs. Many state roads need improvements, but first we have to maintain the road system we have. Even the least traveled state roads are still serving a purpose and are important to people living in rural parts of the state." The citizen advisors in Albuquerque, Roswell, and Las Cruces shared this view.

However, at the Taos and Santa Rosa Citizen Conferences, the citizen advisors recommended that New Mexico devote more funds to improving major highways. As the Taos advisors wrote, "The NMSHTD should focus on improving its most heavily-traveled state highways and pay for these improvements through a gradual reduction in its maintenance of less critical state roads."

Two other recommendations emerged from two or more of the Citizen Conferences. First, advisors recommended that the State of New Mexico enlarge the road fund through increased revenues (e.g., an increase in the gasoline tax, increased trucking fees, etc.) or by permitting the NMSHTD to buy goods and services without paying gross receipt taxes. Second, some citizen advisors recommended reducing truck weight limits on New Mexico's highways.

INTRODUCTION

The New Mexico highway system needs to be repaired and possibly changed to meet our state's future transportation needs. Planning studies conducted by the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD) have revealed that there are many ways to address this problem. In choosing a solution to the state's transportation problem, the Department will look not only at technical considerations but also at the values and concerns of the general public. To gain insight into the public's views on long-range transportation planning, the NMSHTD undertook two projects with the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy (IPP). An October, 1996, telephone survey of 594 New Mexico adults provided general insight into how the New Mexico public thinks about transportation,¹ and a series of six public meetings called "Citizen Conferences" gave Department officials the chance to elicit specific policy recommendations from 53 citizens from across the state.

TAKING STOCK OF THE SURVEY

Before designing the citizen conferences, a few facts were already known about the public's attitudes toward transportation policy. In the 1996 survey, only 12% of respondents said they were "very well" informed about "issues concerning New Mexico's roads and highways," and 44% said they were only "slightly" or "not at all" informed. Although New Mexicans felt uninformed, it was also learned that most had *experience* with transportation issues, even if they did not think of them in such terms. Ninety-six percent said that they drive a car or truck on a regular basis, and on average respondents took seventeen trips of one hundred miles or more each year.

Given this familiarity with New Mexico roads, it was not surprising to learn that respondents had strong opinions about the quality of the state's highways. Seventy percent of those surveyed said that the "quality of New Mexico roads and highways" was only "fair" or "poor," and the same percentage gave those low ratings to the "roads and highways" in their own cities or towns. Forty-nine percent said that New Mexico's roads and highways are worse than those in Arizona, Colorado, and Texas, compared to only 4% who said that our state's roads were better.

Based on these survey responses, the NMSHTD knew that the public shared its concerns about the declining quality of New Mexico's highways. Other survey questions also revealed some of the public's thoughts about how to address these problems. When asked what the top priority should be for the Department, 41% of respondents said that it should be "increasing traffic safety."

¹ The survey was conducted October 11-29, 1996, from the Institute for Public Policy Survey Research Center. A list of phone numbers was generated by combining a list of current New Mexico phone prefixes with a set of random numbers, and 65% of all eligible households contacted agreed to participate in the survey. For response frequencies for each survey question, see Appendix A of the 1996 Institute survey.

This was followed by “decreasing traffic congestion” (21%), “maintaining rural road systems” (14%), “maintaining city road systems” (13%), and “building new roads” (8%). When asked to divide up a budget among these priorities, respondents, on average, allocated 34% of the budget to maintenance, 21% to safety improvements, 20% to new roads, and 17% to reducing congestion.

These results suggested that the public saw a need for maintaining safe and uncongested highways, but it remained unclear to the NMSHTD how these surface opinions could be distilled into more concrete policy recommendations. According to the survey, New Mexico citizens might be interested in providing such recommendations: 73% thought “public influence over decisions made by the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department” should be increased, and 51% said they would attend a public meeting on transportation sponsored by the Department if they “heard about” one. Nevertheless, it was the Department’s experience that attendance at such meetings was very low, and those who came were not the same broad cross-section of the public that was represented in the telephone survey. Conducting another survey would not suffice because the public needed more information about transportation before it could arrive at an informed policy choice, and the telephone interview setting was not ideal for extended discussion of complex planning issues.

DESIGNING CITIZEN CONFERENCES

These considerations led the NMSHTD to contract with the IPP to hold the six New Mexico Citizen Conferences on Transportation. The conferences were intended to provide a clear window into how average New Mexicans think about transportation when provided with essential background information, exposed to diverse perspectives on the issue, and given time to deliberate upon a set of policy options.

To achieve this purpose, each conference was designed as a day-long public meeting centered around a group of 6-12 adult citizens, selected at random to represent the diverse views and demographics of a region of the state. These “citizen advisors” voluntarily agreed to participate at the conference and received a \$200 honorarium for their time and effort.

Each conference began with a morning question-and-answer session in a public auditorium. There the citizen advisors asked policy questions of a panel of experts and concerned citizens. The panel members were selected by the NMSHTD in consultation with the IPP to ensure that the panelists represented a broad range of opinions and expertise on transportation in New Mexico. At the end of the morning session, advisors heard brief comments from members of the audience who wished to add to the dialogue between advisors and panelists.

After taking a break for lunch, the citizen advisors then retired to a deliberation room for the afternoon. Aided by an IPP moderator, the advisors reviewed three different long-range transportation policies that the NMSHTD could pursue. When they chose to do so, they also had

the chance to consult further with any panelists or NMSHTD officials, who were seated in an adjoining room and watching the deliberations on a closed-circuit television. Toward the end of their afternoon session, the advisors attempted to develop a set of written policy recommendations, which they drafted with the assistance of the moderator. Advisors were encouraged to reach consensus on their long-range transportation policy suggestions, and they were able to do so at each of the six conferences.

At 4 p.m., the advisors returned to the public auditorium and held a press conference to present their recommendations. One of the advisors read aloud the citizens' recommendations, then the advisors answered questions from the public and media in attendance. Advisors responded to queries about the details of their recommendations, the policy options that they did not choose to recommend, and the nature of their experience at the conference.

THE CONFERENCE ISSUE

To ensure productive conferences, the IPP worked with NMSHTD officials to develop a realistic and straightforward policy scenario, which is described below. We then developed a brochure to give advisors background information and a clear understanding of the scenario. First, the brochure introduced citizens to the transportation issue:

The Citizen Conferences address transportation policy—an important issue that New Mexicans often overlook. Transportation is one of the most important parts of our daily lives. To work, learn, play, and shop, most of us travel constantly by car, bus, plane, train, bike, and foot. Everything we see in grocery stores, restaurants, and shopping malls is brought to us by commercial truck, rail, and air transportation.

In New Mexico, the heart of our transportation system is the network of public roads and highways that stretch across every region of the state. There are approximately 87,000 miles of public roads in New Mexico. Local governments are responsible for most of these roads, and the State manages approximately 12,000 miles of them, including the U.S. interstates and state highways.

Neither local nor state governments have sufficient funds to care for these roads, so every year the number of roads needing repair increases. Working with \$500 million in state and federal revenue, the NMSHTD uses its budget to make top-priority road repairs, make hazardous roads safer, and reduce traffic congestion.

However, the Department believes that 40% of the roads in the State Highway System already need pavement repairs, have dangerous curves, or have too many traffic jams. Over the next 30 years, it is likely that the State will abandon 4,000 of its 12,000 miles of highway and turn these roads over to local and county governments.

Having provided a general understanding of the problems facing the NMSHTD, the brochure then outlined the policy scenario that would be the focus of the conference:

The majority of the Highway Department's budget is committed to road maintenance, and the budget has already been set through 2005. However, the Department has not yet decided how to spend \$40 million of each annual budget from 2005 to 2020, and the Department is asking for advice on how to spend that money, which amounts to a total of \$600 million spent over fifteen years.

The NMSHTD has explored several different ways it could use this \$600 million to address New Mexico's transportation problems. As required by federal law, the Department has tried to find solutions that respect the needs of commercial and recreational motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The Department must also respect the concerns of rural communities, metropolitan areas, and Indian tribal governments in New Mexico, as well as the impact of transportation policies on society, the economy, and the environment. Taking these issues into consideration, the Department can use its available funds in at least three different ways. Each of these three policy choices comes with certain advantages and disadvantages.

The three spending plans that the brochure described were the result of numerous meetings between the IPP and the NMSHTD. The final set of choices had to meet several criteria. They had to: comply with current federal and state law; reflect a wide range of policy alternatives; have clear and significant differences in the way they allocated funds; and highlight important sociopolitical and economic issues associated with transportation planning.

The three choices we ultimately agreed upon were to spend the \$600 million on (1) extending the lives of as many miles of highway as possible, (2) improving key highways, or (3) developing a statewide public transportation system. The brochure described Choice 1 using the following language:

Choice 1: Extending the Life of State Highways

If the NMSHTD followed Choice 1, New Mexico would maintain as many highway miles as possible. Given current budget projections, the State would probably be able to maintain 5,000 miles of highways at minimum standards. When necessary, these 5,000 miles of roads would be reconstructed, a procedure that completely rebuilds a road to ensure its long life.

Choice 1 would also continue to resurface 3,000 miles of state roads to extend their lives for several more years. Because these roads would not be reconstructed, they would eventually wear out, but the process would be more gradual. However, there would not be enough funds to resurface the remaining 4,000 miles of state roads. The NMSHTD would only be able to repair these roads, filling potholes and making other minor repairs.

This choice might be most valuable for those parts of the state that want highways maintained for as long as possible. All three policy choices acknowledge

that 7,000 miles of state road will ultimately wear out, but Choice 1 maintains the health of these roads for a greater number of years.

After introducing the choice, the brochure immediately discussed problems with the choice. This format forced advisors to recognize that there was no “perfect” choice among the three policy options in the brochure. The cons for Choice 1 were described this way:

Critics of Choice 1 point out that the State has more than enough highway to meet its current needs. The population of New Mexico is moving toward the metropolitan areas along the Rio Grande River, and it is unwise to devote so much of the Department’s highway funds to the roads with the least traffic. Other critics point out that this choice continues to rely on roads as the only solution to New Mexico’s transportation problems. In the end, it only delays the decay of roads the State can’t maintain forever.

Choices 2 and 3 were presented using the same style — first presenting the arguments behind the choices, then discussing their problems:

Choice 2: Improving Major State Highways

If the Department picked Choice 2, it would turn 3,000 miles of road over to the local and county governments, which may or may not be able to maintain them. The Department would repair another 4,000 miles of road, which would eventually wear out and become local or county roads.

These actions would save the State millions of dollars, which it could then devote to improving the 5,000 miles of most heavily traveled roads in New Mexico. Choice 2 would improve these roads by widening their lanes and shoulders, straightening some curves, adding safety rails, and conducting more regular maintenance, such as road resurfacing and repairs.

Smoother and safer roads would reduce traffic congestion, wear-and-tear on vehicles, and highway accidents. Wider shoulders would also make highway travel easier for bicyclists.

Some critics of Choice 2 argue that local and county governments will not maintain the roads turned over to them by the State of New Mexico, so the State should continue to resurface and repair these roads as long as possible. Other critics say that improving the major roads will only encourage more people to use them, so the highways will remain congested.

Choice 3: Improving Statewide Public Transportation

The difference between Choice 2 and Choice 3 is that the third choice would reconstruct but not improve the 5,000 miles of major roads in New Mexico. Instead, Choice 3 would devote millions of dollars to improving the statewide public transportation system.

The primary civilian means of transportation is a car with one driver and no passengers. These are called “single occupancy vehicles” or SOVs. An alternative to the swarm of SOVs on our roads is a strong statewide public transportation

system. This system would use vans to connect cities and towns to a stream of busses that would travel along the interstates and principal highways. Many people would drive a short distance to “park and ride” lots, where they would board a bus for the rest of their journey. The NMSHTD might also promote “ride pools” in which people regularly driving to the same destination share a single car or van.

Although this choice would not improve the quality of New Mexico’s major roads, it would make long-distance transportation more affordable for people without cars. It might also make roads safer because every bus or van on the road might replace a dozen cars.

Critics of Choice 3 argue that the state has a responsibility to maintain its roads — the transportation system that New Mexicans know best. Habits change slowly, and if citizens do not use the new public transportation system, the state will have wasted millions of dollars on something travelers don’t want. In addition, a public transportation system does nothing to improve the roads that trucks and other commercial vehicles rely upon. Rather than investing in new kinds of transportation, critics argue, we should improve the road system we already have.

During the course of their deliberation, the advisors had the opportunity to learn about and create alternatives to these choices, but the three policy options outlined in the brochure guided the discussion at every conference in many ways. The advisors’ recommendations never matched perfectly one of the three choices, but their advice to the department always resembled one of the choices. Much of the debate during the conferences focused on the issues that these choices raised about the social, political, and economic impact of different transportation plans. Most importantly, describing the policy scenario as one in which a choice must be made set the tone for the conference; this framing caused advisors to recognize their responsibility for making a decision, and it encouraged the recognition that any decision would be imperfect.

THE CITIZEN ADVISORS

For the Citizen Conferences to be successful, it was essential that the citizen advisors represent the diverse views and experiences of the New Mexico public. Accordingly, the citizen advisors were recruited using a method that ensured a relatively representative random sample of all adult New Mexicans.

The NMSHTD specified that the six conferences should roughly correspond to the six New Mexico Highway Districts, in that the citizen advisors attending a given conference should come from within a single district. With a few minor adjustments, this correspondence was maintained. A pool of survey respondents was created for each conference by combining lists of people who were reached during previous IPP surveys using random-digit dialing within New Mexico. These pools were used to create approximate demographic quotas for each of the six conference areas (e.g., for a given conference representing a particular region of New Mexico, 30-45% of citizen advisors ought to be Hispanic). When interviewers recruited potential citizen advisors by phone, they were careful to stay within these quotas.

Interviewers successfully recruited a representative group of citizen advisors for each conference, and few potential advisors declined the invitation to participate. When interviewers asked eligible respondents whether they would be willing to take part in a Citizen Conference, only ten out of eighty-one said they did not wish to participate. One reason for this 88% acceptance rate was that citizen advisors were offered a \$200 honorarium to thank them for taking a full day to discuss transportation issues. Had we relied solely upon the persuasive talents of the interviewers, recruitment would have been more difficult and the pool of citizen advisors would have probably been less representative of the general public.

THE REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE ADVISORS

As shown in Table 1, these recruitment methods resulted in a rather representative sample of 71 citizen advisors. Demographically and attitudinally, this group of citizen advisors was a rather representative microcosm of the state population, although the advisors slightly overrepresented men, Native Americans, and people with college degrees.

The majority (56%) of participants were male. A plurality (46%) were Anglo, 35% were Hispanic, 17% were Native American, and 2% were Asian. The median age of participants was 42, and the average age was 44. A third of the citizen advisors had never attended college, 35% had some college education but no degree, 19% were college graduates, and 13% had a post-graduate degree. A majority (56%) of the participants had a 1996 household income under \$40,000.

Table 1. Comparison of Advisors and General Public

Sample Characteristic	New Mexico Public*	Pool of Citizen Advisors
Median Age	42	42
Percent Male	49%	56%
Percent Hispanic	24%	35%
Percent Never Attended College	38%	33%
Percent Household Income < \$40,000	61%	56%
Percent Identify with Democratic Party	46%	41%
Percent Self-Identified as Conservative	45%	54%
Percent Viewing “Crime” as Biggest Problem in NM	35%	41%

* New Mexico public data are figures taken from the Spring 1997 *Quarterly Profile of New Mexico Citizens* published by the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy.

A plurality (41%) identified with the Democratic Party, a third said they were Republican, 22% said they had no party affiliation, and one citizen advisor identified with the Green Party. Fifty-four percent of participants identified themselves as politically conservative, 21% said they were “middle of the road,” and the remaining 25% said they were liberal. A plurality (41%) said crime was “the single, biggest problem facing people in New Mexico today,” and 24% said that jobs and the economy were the biggest problem.

NONPARTICIPATION

Fifty-three of the seventy-one people recruited by the IPP ultimately chose to participate in the Citizen Conferences, and Figure 1 shows the geographic dispersion of these citizen advisors for the six conferences, which roughly corresponded to the six New Mexico Highway Districts. In other words, one-in-four of the potential advisors did not attend their scheduled conference.

There were a few differences between the group of citizen advisors initially recruited and those who chose to show up at the conferences. Women disproportionately canceled: they made up 48% of the original recruitment pool but only 41% of the participants. Likewise, people with household incomes under \$40,000 made up 62% of the recruitment pool but only 56% of the participants, and Democrats were 50% of those recruited but only 41% of those participating. In summary, the group that disproportionately canceled after initially agreeing to participate was Democratic women living in lower-income households.²

² A related issue was the fact that two female respondents complained of car trouble when explaining their inability to attend a conference. Both times, we attempted to make arrangements for a rental car or a taxi, but the participants ultimately chose not to attend. Persons with regular car trouble and people with lower

Figure 1

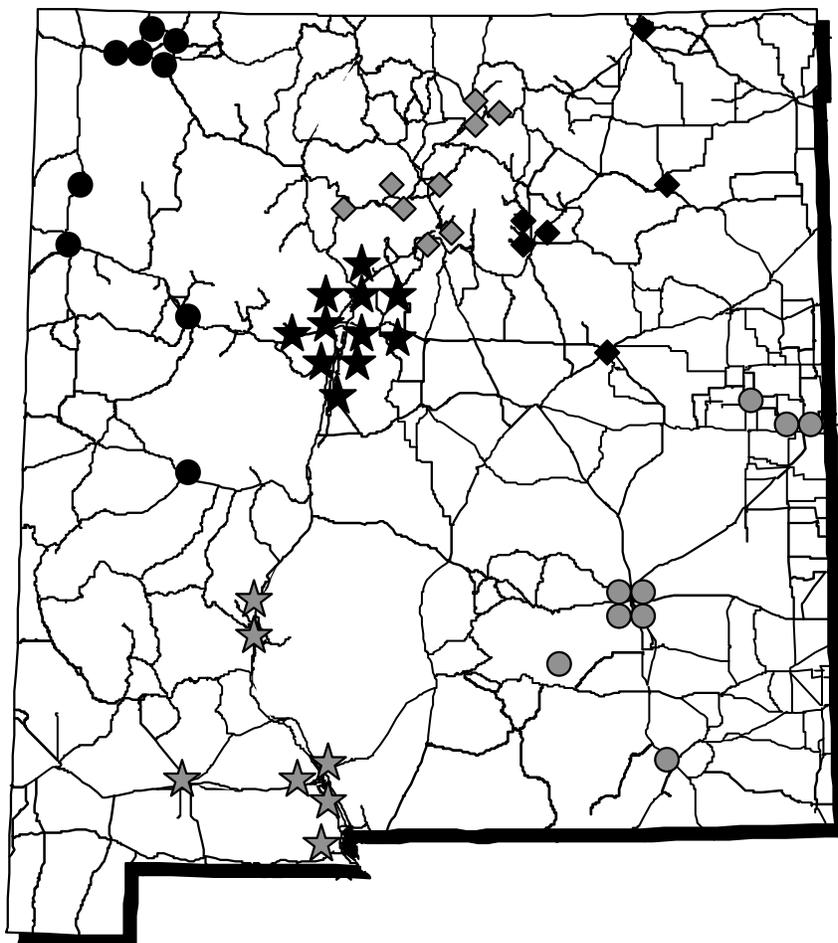
Map showing New Mexico Highways and the Approximate Residential Locations of the 53 Citizen Advisors in the New Mexico Citizen Conferences on Transportation

Legend

Each star represents one citizen advisor who participated in a Citizen Conference. The color shows which conference each advisor attended.

- ★ Albuquerque advisors
- Gallup advisors
- Roswell advisors
- ◆ Taos advisors
- ◆ Santa Rosa advisors
- ★ Las Cruces advisors

Map created by Amy Fromer, Research Manager, UNM Institute for Public Policy.



incomes may have a different perspective on transportation in New Mexico than other residents. Fortunately, the conferences included advisors with those experiences, but they may have been underrepresented relative to other groups.

THE PANELISTS

To provide these diverse citizen advisors with pertinent information about transportation issues in New Mexico, the aforementioned conference brochure was given to each citizen advisor prior to arriving at their conference. After reading the brochure, citizen advisors had a better idea of the policy choices they had to make, but the advisors still had many questions. To make sure these questions were addressed, each conference began with a three-hour question-and-answer session where advisors could query a panel of transportation activists and experts. These panelists were chosen using several criteria. Each panel had to include members sympathetic to each of the three choices and at least one person representing the unique concerns of the highway district in which the conference took place. Panelists were also chosen based on their ability to communicate effectively with the lay public.

Using these criteria, panelists were selected for each conference, and the vast majority of these people were able to attend the conferences. The following page provides a list of those attending, including some panelists who took part in more than one conference. In addition, two NMSHTD officials, Leroy Sandoval (Director, Planning Division) and Richard Montoya (Supervisor, Regional Planning Section), served on many of the panels, and one of them was always the primary person answering citizen advisors' questions during their afternoon deliberations.

Panelist	Affiliation	Convention City
Anne Watkins	Director of Transit & Parking, City of Albuquerque	Albuquerque
Mark C. Childs	Adj. Prof., UNM School of Architecture & Planning	Albuquerque
Michael Barnes	NMSHTD District 3 Engineer	Albuquerque
Paul L. Silverman	Member, Albuquerque Air Quality Board	Albuquerque
Ron Forte	Director of Transportation Planning, Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments	Albuquerque
Victor Sheppard	Executive Director, NM Motor Carriers Association	Abuquerque, Gallup
David Fisher	Governmental Liason, Union Pacific Railroad	Gallup
Fernando Trujillo	NMSHTD District 6 Technical Support Engineer	Gallup
Jim Maes	NM Highlands University at San Juan College	Gallup
Patricia Lundstrom	Director, Northwest Council of Governments	Gallup
Salisa Norstog	Navajo Nation Dept. of Transportation	Gallup
Wayne Claw	Navajo Nation Transit System	Gallup
Curtis Schrader	Village Administrator, Village of Cloudcroft	Roswell
Paul Sorenson	Director, Pecos Trails Transit	Roswell
Russ Doss	Director, Hobbs Public Works Department	Roswell
Victor Munoz	Texas & NM Railroad	Roswell
Bryan Danielson	Los Alamos County	Taos
Domingo Sanchez III	Santa Fe County Manager	Taos
Ed Gonzales	Consultant, Pojoaque Pueblo Construction Services	Taos
Frederick A. Peralta	Mayor, City of Taos	Taos

Panelist	Affiliation	Convention City
Ken Thompson	NMSHTD District 5 Staff	Taos
Mark Tibbetts	Northern Pueblos Regional Planning Organization	Taos
Mark Wright	Transp. Engineer, Jicarilla Apache Reservation	Taos
Marvin Sheriff	Director of Public Works, Village of Angel Fire	Taos, Santa Rosa
Douglas Powers	Planner, City of Tucumcari	Santa Rosa
Eric Honeyfield	City Manager of Raton	Santa Rosa
Sev Sisneros	NMSHTD District 4 Staff	Santa Rosa
Todd Leopold	Eastern Plains Council of Governments	Santa Rosa
Rhonda Martinez	NMSHTD District 1 Engineer	Las Cruces
Carlos Ruiz	NMSHTD Office of International Programs	Las Cruces
Don Rauch	Southwest Council of Governments	Las Cruces
Douglas Copland	Southcentral Regional Planning Organization	Las Cruces
Mike Noonchester	Las Cruces Transit Director	Las Cruces

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE ADVISORS

Once again, the primary purpose of the New Mexico Citizen Conferences on Transportation was to get informed input from the public about long-range transportation policy in New Mexico. The conferences gave the NMSHTD the opportunity to see how the general public thinks and talks about transportation issues and how they suggest the Department plan for the future. In this report, we summarize two kinds of feedback the NMSHTD received. First, we review the kinds of questions that citizens wanted answered before they could make policy recommendations. These questions implicitly reveal the concerns, curiosities, and beliefs that New Mexicans have regarding transportation. Knowing these beliefs and concerns can help Department officials understand the public’s perspective. Second, we look at the deliberation that took place after the morning question-and-answer session. These deliberations led to citizen advisors’ final policy recommendations, and their open-ended discussions shed more light on why the advisors arrived at their ultimate policy choices.

WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Before the first conference, IPP planners and NMSHTD officials debated how the morning question-and-answer session would proceed. Would the citizens be too shy to ask questions? Would they be able to formulate relevant, policy-oriented queries for the panelists? Would the panelists give laborious answers that went into mind-numbing detail and curtailed the citizen advisors’ ability to ask the questions on their minds?

Fortunately, it turned out that the advisors were quite capable of asking pertinent questions and following them up when the answers were inadequate. The panelists, chosen partly for their ability to communicate effectively, kept their answers relatively short, and advisors appeared to find

their answers helpful. As shown below, during the advisors' afternoon deliberation sessions, they often made reference to facts, figures, and ideas brought up by panelists during the morning session.

The nature of these questions showed that New Mexicans were aware of the highway maintenance problems but unclear about many facts regarding such maintenance. Citizens asked why the roads decayed so quickly, why potholes formed, why cracks developed. They asked what could be done to address these problems, and some asked whether these problems might be due to poor construction on the part of the NMSHTD or its contractors. Other questions on this topic included the following: Do contractors have to warranty their work? How long should a well-constructed road last? What can we do to preserve our roads? Why is full reconstruction necessary? Why do roads take so long to repair? Why are there often people standing around when a road crew is doing repairs? How does the Department prioritize its numerous repair projects? Is New Mexico experimenting with new road materials and maintenance methods?

Citizens were unsure about the relationship between the state and federal government. and asked several questions on the subject: Where does highway money come from, and who does the work? Do state, federal, and local taxes all go to roads? Which taxes fill the road fund, and what, specifically, is done with money from the gasoline tax? Is New Mexico getting its fair share of money from the federal government, or is our state subsidizing other states? What flexibility does the NMSHTD have in spending money that it gets from the federal government?

The citizen advisors also needed to better understand the road transfers that were important parts of Choices 2 and 3 in the brochure they had read before the conference. If the state is going to let go of some miles of road, the citizens wanted to discuss the specifics: Which roads will be turned over to the counties? Will counties have the knowledge and resources to maintain these highways, or will they simply deteriorate faster? Has the state ever turned over roads to counties before, and if so, what happened when they did? Will the counties get money from the state to help them maintain the roads? What percentage of state highways are dirt roads or little-used roads?

Choice 3 was confusing to many citizen advisors, and most implied skepticism about a statewide transportation network when they asked about it: Would trains or busses attempt to connect cities like Farmington and Roswell to the cities along the Rio Grande? Would the cost of a high-speed "bullet train" from Albuquerque to Santa Fe be prohibitive? Why should the state play a role in local public transportation? Should rural counties subsidize Albuquerque Metro? Are New Mexicans, who are well-accustomed to their cars, really so likely to use public transportation outside of Albuquerque? How long would it take to build a statewide transit system?

Another cluster of questions centered around the large trucks that travel the state's highways: What are the state and federal laws regulating truck traffic? What authority does New Mexico have to raise fees or limit the weight of trucks that travel our highways? What fees do

trucks pay for traveling New Mexico's highways, and how often do they evade weigh stations? How much damage do they inflict on state highways?

Although the focus of the conference was on a long-range planning scenario that had a constrained budget, citizen advisors were curious about the potential for expanding the road fund. They asked how the road fund has changed over the years and where its revenues come from. Which government body has control over the road fund? Has New Mexico considered using toll roads, as other states do? Concerning the gasoline tax, advisors asked why gas prices didn't fall when some of the tax was repealed. Advisors also asked about New Mexico's gas prices relative to other states.

Many other questions came up during the morning session. These questions addressed everything from airports to rest stops, and they revealed citizens' capacity to grapple with some of the more complex aspects of a full long-range transportation plan. What responsibility does NMSHTD have for trains and planes in New Mexico? How quickly will the state grow in coming years, and how will this affect transportation? Is tourism likely to increase or decrease in the near future? Does the speed limit affect the rate of road damage? Are reservation and pueblo roads under a different jurisdiction? What does each panelist see as the main transportation problem facing New Mexico? Which policy choice makes transportation safest?

These questions confirmed one of the findings of the 1996 survey: New Mexicans are not very well informed about transportation policy, but they have a sufficiently broad base of experience to recognize some of the things that they need to know before making policy recommendations. The questions listed above showed a willingness to consider the pros, cons, and details of each of the three policy choices in the conference brochure, but they also showed that the advisors had an interest in addressing other policy-relevant issues, including the size of the road fund and the regulations placed upon truck traffic. In the deliberations that followed, the advisors further articulated these concerns and were able to produce coherent and fiscally-constrained policy recommendations, as well as suggestions for gaining additional revenue and coping with the damage that trucks do to state highways.

HOW CITIZENS THINK ABOUT TRANSPORTATION POLICY

By the time the citizen advisors sat down to deliberate on transportation policy in the afternoon, they had already developed a rather clear understanding of the task before them. Nonetheless, the moderator reviewed their charge, emphasizing that the advisors had to make a fiscally constrained policy recommendation before addressing other issues, particularly increased highway funding. Occasionally, the moderator stepped in during the advisors' deliberations when a misunderstanding appeared or the advisors got off track. In Gallup and Taos, for instance, an advisor argued that the improvement of interstates should be New Mexico's top priority, yet he said

that this led him to support Choice 1. When the moderator reiterated the implications of Choices 1 and 2, however, the advisor recognized that he actually supported the second choice, rather than the first. As another example, in Albuquerque and Roswell, an advisor persistently argued for increased state funding for roads prior to making any fiscally constrained recommendations. When the moderator reminded this advisor of the importance of first making policy suggestions within the NMSHTD's projected budget, the advisor relented and reintroduced his concerns about budget limits only after the advisors had made a set of constrained recommendations. Although the moderator intervened in this way at times, more often the advisors themselves would keep their discussion moving forward and would recognize their own inconsistencies or disagreements on their own.

The best way to understand how citizen advisors arrived at their recommendations is to review each conference's afternoon deliberations. The morning question-and-answer session with the expert panel gave citizen advisors many ideas and addressed many of their initial questions, but it was during the three-hour afternoon sessions that advisors moved from their individual viewpoints toward a group consensus on transportation policy. Reviewing these sessions makes clearer how advisors balanced their different concerns and opinions to arrive at a single set of recommendations. After summarizing each set of deliberations, in fact, it will be easier to see the continuity underlying the six conferences, even when the advisors arrived at different recommendations.

The Albuquerque Conference

In Albuquerque, each of the three choices was supported by at least one of the citizen advisors. A plurality of the citizen advisors favored Choice 1, but there was one citizen speaking forcefully for the second and third choices and others favored combinations that involved each of the choices. The advisors' deliberations began by focusing on the importance of connecting New Mexico's distant cities and towns. As one man said, "We have important commercial centers in New Mexico that contribute greatly to the overall economy of the state — Farmington, Las Cruces, Alamogordo, Roswell, Carlsbad, Santa Fe." Many other advisors agreed that these parts of the state were important and merited well-maintained highways, and in the end this argument prevailed, anchoring the advisors on Choice 1.

Nonetheless, the citizen advisors found a way to integrate the other policy choices into their final recommendations. The advisors expressed some resentment toward the state, criticizing its alleged misuse of the gasoline tax and its large bureaucracy. This, combined with an allegiance to local government, led some advisors to argue that the counties could maintain some highways for less than could the NMSHTD. The advisors ultimately agreed to a scheme whereby the state would pay counties to maintain some highway miles at a cost lower than that which the Department had

estimated. If counties took the state up on this offer, the Department could use those funds for something else. Seven advisors wanted to use the savings for road improvements (Choice 2) and four wanted to use it as incentives for public transportation (Choice 3). Those favoring transit incentives argued that transit means reduced wear-and-tear on New Mexico highways. As one woman said, “The more cars you have on the road, the harder it is to maintain it.” However, a majority of the group agreed with the citizen advisor who argued, “The transit system should be paid for by the people that use it. ... I don’t see putting state money into a local transit system at all.” This disagreement persisted and became the only minority dissent that was written into advisors’ policy recommendations at the six conferences.

Perhaps to assuage this defeated minority, the Albuquerque citizen advisors made one more gesture toward Choice 3. The advisors reached full consensus on the point that the state should not stand in the way of local or regional governments developing public transportation networks. During the morning session, some panelists had discussed the effort to create a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) that would bridge Bernalillo County with adjoining counties and create a joint taxing authority. The advisors agreed that the state government should not stand in the way of local governments who wish to form RTAs. They weren’t opposed to the concept of public transportation, only to the idea that the state government should play a leading role in its development.

The Gallup Conference

The Gallup citizen advisors also made recommendations closest to Choice 1. The initial policy choices of the advisors were almost identical to those in Albuquerque, with a plurality favoring Choice 1, one person favoring Choice 2, one favoring Choice 3, and four more favoring a mix of the choices. The advisors agreed that turning roads over to the counties was probably tantamount to decommissioning them. As one man said, “If you do that ... you might as well just bulldoze them up because the counties won’t be able to maintain them.” For many advisors, this was simply unacceptable. Choice 1, one man argued, “does the most good for the most people” in New Mexico because so many citizens depend on the less-traveled highways that Choices 2 and 3 would disband. These considerations led the group to choose Choice 1 over the others as their basic policy recommendation.

The Gallup citizen advisors not only agreed on Choice 1, they also chose to go farther and recommend increases in the highway budget. From the outset, some advisors had been recommending increased funding, and one woman insisted that all three choices were unacceptable because “there’s not enough money” to indefinitely maintain New Mexico’s highways. Later, another man chimed in that “it will be essential to get additional revenue.” The advisors agreed that these funds should be devoted to repaving those roads that would otherwise only receive repairs.

Again, this recommendation came out of their concern for keeping more remote roads at an acceptable level of maintenance. Some advisors had roads on Navajo land in mind when they supported this policy, but others talked about roads as far away as Las Cruces.

To fund these additional NMSHTD maintenance programs, the citizen advisors turned to experts who had spoken to them earlier that morning. The advisors were dismayed to learn that only a portion of gasoline tax revenue went to the roads. A panelist also explained that the Department spends a portion of its budget paying other state agencies for tax collection and law enforcement. As one man said, “All of the money that’s earmarked for transportation should go to transportation. ... That’s ridiculous to have \$17 million go back into the general fund” and to pay gross receipt taxes on Department purchases. A woman added, “For a state government to be paying taxes on its own money? That’s ridiculous.” The advisors’ final recommendations incorporated these concerns about the perceived “diversion” of highway funds.

The Gallup citizen advisors also discussed tightening regulations on trucks. They were concerned about the damage that trucks do to the highways, particularly when they evade the weight-distance fees they are supposed to pay the state. One advisor had driven a truck for years and explained how he could take back-roads, sometimes through the Navajo reservation, to dodge the weigh stations. To generate more revenue from trucks (and tourists), they considered making portions of the interstates into tollways, but when they asked the NMSHTD for more information about the feasibility of tollways, they learned that they were not cost-effective in New Mexico. They discussed other truck-related policies, but they never reached agreement on any of their proposals.

The Roswell Conference

As in Gallup and Albuquerque, the Roswell advisors’ recommendations were closest to Choice 1, even though at the outset only three of the eight advisors preferred that choice. Three advisors initially favored Choice 3, but they were swayed by the argument that Choice 1 should take precedence. In fact, one of the Choice 3 advocates made that argument himself at the beginning of the afternoon deliberations. After stating his preference for Choice 3, he said, “As far as maintaining the roads you got, I think it’s obvious that you need to. Don’t lose what you already have. ... Keep what you’ve got and then make things more futuristic — as far as public transit — as the cities can afford them.” In the course of the discussion, Choice 3 came to be perceived as a luxury that the NMSHTD could not afford, given the maintenance needs of the states’ existing highway network.

The Roswell citizen advisors were also clearly influenced by the information they heard during the morning panel discussion, as well as the answers they received from NMSHTD officials when they asked questions of them during the advisors’ afternoon deliberations. The single biggest

influence was a panelist's discussion of road sealing technologies. Holding up a technical paper on oil, sand, and chip-sealing, the panelist had explained how low-cost methods of road repair can significantly extend the life of a highway. As one advisor remembered it, "Someone on the panel had said something about a Choice 4, which is like a constant maintenance" in which the roads are periodically sealed using different methods at different time intervals. The advisors' recommendations referred directly back to these road sealing methods, but the general reason underlying this language was an interest in making more low-cost improvements to roads rather than a small number of expensive road repairs.

In addition, the citizen advisors were committed to increasing the NMSHTD's available funds and discussed many revenue-generating mechanisms, such as new automobile taxes, safety inspection fees, privatizing rest areas, new oil excise taxes and a new lottery game where the proceeds go to the roads. The advisors also talked about dedicating to the road fund a portion of the funds the state will receive from the pueblos. When the moderator pressed them to focus on a limited number of possible funding schemes, they focused on what one advisor called "non-diversion of funds." Advisors thought that the Department should not have to pay gross receipt taxes on its purchases, nor should it have to pay for the services provided to it by other state agencies. The advisors had come to see the "non-diversion of funds" not just as a source of new highway revenue, but also as the righting of a wrong. As one man said, the roads should be getting "one hundred percent" of the funds "they're entitled to." In the end, they incorporated these concerns into their written recommendations.

The Roswell citizen advisors also sought to increase the state revenue that comes from the trucking industry. They discussed a variety of restrictions on trucking, especially barring trucks from many secondary state highways that will fall into disrepair more slowly if spared from the ravages of heavy truck traffic. This particular idea, however, fell by the wayside due to the efforts of a single advisor, who argued that trucks are critical to the rural economies connected by those very highways. The advisors acknowledged his concerns and toyed briefly with barring only "through traffic" — those trucks that were driving on those secondary highways without stopping. Even this idea lost its luster when feedback from the NMSHTD pointed out that truck traffic on the secondary highways was primarily local traffic, such as "from farm-to-market, serving energy production, or taking goods to small markets." Ultimately, the advisors settled on simply bringing its truck weight limits and evasion fines up to the national average. These modest policy changes seemed reasonable even to the advisor who had earlier dissented, and they appeared in the advisors' final recommendations.

The Taos Conference

The Taos citizen advisors were the first ones to make recommendations that were not centered around Choice 1. They began their deliberations with five of the nine advisors favoring none of the three choices. Two wanted to go with Choice 1, two with Choice 2, and the rest wanted combinations of the choices, along with other policies not included in the three choices. The two advocates of Choice 2 both happened to reside on pueblos, and neither was outspoken in their support for the choice. Their view prevailed, in part, because of other advisors' initial leanings toward the second choice. For example, one advisor said he would support Choice 2 so long as the state did not turn roads over to the counties without giving counties at least some funds to pay for maintenance. He viewed Choice 2 as "passing the buck" to the counties, which he saw as unfair or imprudent. "Choice 2, I'm not dead-set against," said another advisor, "but you can't hand it all over at once." Later, another advisor added that the counties lacked the "personnel and equipment" to maintain state highways, especially the poorer counties in the state.

These reservations against Choice 2 slowly dissipated as the advisors found ways to soften the blow it gave to the counties. The advisors reviewed a map of the lower-priority state highways and saw many roads that they thought could, in fact, be turned over to the counties. Lacking the time necessary to specify which roads might go to the counties, the advisors instead settled on the identification of two selection criteria — small economic impact and fewer people effected. As a show of sympathy for the counties, the advisors also developed language in their recommendations showing their desire for the NMSHTD to do this "cautiously" while trying to assist counties in maintaining the roads for which they will become responsible. The wording of their final recommendations tempered support for Choice 2 with the same concerns that had prompted previous groups of advisors to support Choice 1.

As in Albuquerque, the Taos citizen advisors complemented their basic recommendations with supplementary recommendations. They considered but rejected many proposals regarding increased regulations on trucks and greater emphasis on public transportation. Out of these discussions came two concrete proposals, however, which did receive the support of the Taos advisors and appeared in their recommendations. The advisors chose to devote a small amount of their annual budget (\$1 million) to the promotion of carpools, and advisors endorsed the idea of making any new highway lanes into "high occupancy vehicle lanes." In addition, the advisors engaged in extensive question-and-answer exchanges with NMSHTD officials in order to arrive at a recommendation that the state put in place additional truck weigh-stations to improve trucking fee enforcement.

The Santa Rosa Conference

As in Taos, the citizen advisors in Santa Rosa made recommendations that most closely resembled Choice 2. From the outset of their deliberations, exactly half of the advisors favored the second choice, and the others were sympathetic toward it. As a result, they moved relatively quickly toward consensus on Choice 2. The advisors agreed that it would be better for the NMSHTD to maintain a small but high-quality highway system than to struggle to keep a larger, eroding system intact. “To me,” said one man, “Choice 2 is setting the priorities more correctly than the other two” choices. A woman added, “Seems like they [the Highway Dept.] have been on [choice] number one forever, anyway.” The man agreed, “Trying to maintain the status quo, and they’re not doing a very good job of that.”

Because the Santa Rosa citizen advisors reached consensus so quickly on their basic choice, they had the time to elaborate on the rationale for their recommendations. In doing so, they made clear that they wanted to improve roads primarily for safety reasons. The luxury of time allowed them to speak in detail about adding passing lanes, widening shoulders on interchanges, and other improvements that should make traffic flow more smoothly and safely.

Prompted, in part, by comments the panelists made earlier that same day, the Santa Rosa citizen advisors also focused on truck traffic. They discussed trucking, state regulations, diesel fuel taxes, and weight-distance fee enforcement at length and invited an official from the NMSHTD into the room to provide more information on these topics. The bottom line for the advisors was that trucking companies should contribute more to the road fund to compensate for the damage that their trucks do to New Mexico highways. “We should either bring truck weight limits down to national levels,” explained one man, “or make them pay for the added weight.” A woman agreed, “They are the ones that destroy most of the main highways.” Another man made reference to a statistic he recalled from the morning: “Just doing the math, truckers do \$250 million worth of damage ... and only pay for a fraction of the damage they’re doing. ... So especially on interstates, we’re going to have to find a way to make them pay for it.” The specific proposals they ultimately agreed upon were raising weight-distance fees (as in Gallup) and improving enforcement (as in Taos).

The Las Cruces Conference

The Las Cruces citizen advisors had a very different view than their counterparts in Santa Rosa. As happened at the Albuquerque, Gallup, and Roswell conferences, the Las Cruces conference resulted in another set of recommendations anchored on Choice 1. A plurality of advisors shared this view, and they spoke forcefully for the need to maintain as many miles of highway for as long as possible. One advisor said that turning roads over to the counties, as Choices 2 and 3 would do, simply “passed on the responsibility” for these roads, and only the state had the personnel and equipment to maintain the highways efficiently. As another advisor said, “If

we turn roads over to the counties, they'll fall apart.” Only Choice 1, he added, includes extensive resurfacing, which has more long-term benefit than minor road repairs.

Most citizen advisors agreed, however, that Choice 1 alone was not enough. If you have to fix something, one man said, “you have to fix it totally.” It was that desire to do more than extend the lives of deteriorating highways that led the advisors to seek additional financing for highway maintenance. They asked the NMSHTD what portion of the gasoline tax went to the road fund and learned that roughly a quarter of proceeds from that tax wound up in the general fund. The advisors also learned from the NMSHTD that a two cent increase in the gasoline tax could raise roughly \$20 million in revenue. Eventually, the advisors came to agree that increasing the gasoline tax was the best way to increase the road fund, and they voted on different tax increases. Finally, a compromise position — a two-to-three cent increase — won unanimous support.

The citizen advisors entertained many other proposals. Some of these, such as tourism taxes, toll roads, privatization of highway maintenance, changes in the reconstruction bidding process, and reduced truck weight limits, did not make it into the advisors' final recommendations because of vocal opposition or only lukewarm support. As in previous conferences, however, the advisors were able to reach consensus on changes in trucking regulations. The advisors agreed on increased fees and fines for overweight trucks, largely because they perceived trucks as doing disproportionate damage to New Mexico highways compared to the funds they contribute to the road fund.

SUMMARY OF DELIBERATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

One way of reviewing the six citizen conference deliberations is to summarize citizen advisors' initial and final policy preferences. Just as jury deliberations are designed to move jurors from disparate viewpoints toward a common verdict, so were these discussions aimed at bringing advisors to the point where they could agree on a set of coherent policy recommendations to the NMSHTD.

Table 2 shows that prior to deliberation, no single policy choice was favored by a majority of citizen advisors at any of the six conferences. In Taos, the majority only agreed that none of the three choices was acceptable without changes. Although Choice 1 was clearly the most popular of the three basic choices, it was never preferred by a majority of the advisors at the beginning of a conference's afternoon deliberations.

Table 2. General Policy Choices Before Deliberation

Conference	Choice 1: Maintain	Choice 2: Improve	Choice 3: Pub Trans	Mixed/ Other
Albuquerque	5	1	1	4
Gallup	4	1	1	4
Roswell	4	0	3	2
Taos	2	2	0	5
Santa Rosa	1	3	0	2
Las Cruces	3	1	0	4
Totals	20	8	5	20

Table 3 shows that despite this initial lack of consensus, citizen advisors were able to move toward unanimous policy recommendations at all six conferences. Four of the six conferences gravitated toward Choice 1, and two favored Choice 2. The closest thing to an exception was at the Taos conference, where one advisor remained favorable toward Choice 1 right until the end, but he did not wish to stand in the way of a unanimous recommendation of Choice 2, particularly after the advisors had weakened considerably the plan to turn roads over to the counties. Also, in Las Cruces, two advisors remained somewhat uncertain of their policy preferences but also chose to support the majority's recommendation that the NMSHTD follow a policy closest to Choice 1.

Table 3. General Policy Choices After Deliberation

Conference	Choice 1: Maintain	Choice 2: Improve	Choice 3: Pub Trans
Albuquerque	11	0	0
Gallup	10	0	0
Roswell	9	0	0
Taos	0	9	0
Santa Rosa	0	6	0
Las Cruces	8	0	0
Totals	38	15	0

As discussed above and shown in Appendix A, the citizen advisors' recommendations were, in fact, more subtle than Table 3 shows. The Taos and Santa Rosa advisors, for example, shared the other advisors' concerns about turning roads over to the counties, and the Taos advisors revised Choice 2 somewhat to ease the burden on counties that would have to assume responsibility for

some highways. On the other hand, the Albuquerque advisors backed Choice 1 but encouraged counties to attempt to maintain state highways at a lower cost, so that the NMSHTD could use the savings to making improvements along the lines of Choice 2.

After reviewing their deliberations, it was apparent that the citizen advisors' support for Choice 1 came primarily from a belief in the importance of preserving an extensive road network. The conference brochure, panelist testimony, and moderator reminders all made clear to the advisors that even Choice 1 would not be able to maintain 7,000 miles of state highways indefinitely. Most advisors thought it would be unconscionable to abandon these roads, and many viewed turning the roads over to county governments as tantamount to abandonment.

Some citizen advisors, however, were more concerned about the poor condition of the major arteries in New Mexico, and at the conferences, these concerns were paramount. Choice 2 supporters often framed their argument for road improvements in terms of safety. Both cheap and expensive improvements were viewed as necessary to reduce the number of fatalities on interstates and the most heavily-traveled highways.

Although none of the final conference recommendations fully embraced Choice 3, most advisors did see public transportation as a potential good. The main argument against Choice 3 was that the state government should not become involved in local and regional public transit. Albuquerque advisors made this clear in their recommendations when they encouraged the state to not stand in the way of the formation of RTAs. The Taos advisors went a step further and recommended that a small portion of the NMSHTD's flexible spending go toward the promotion of carpools and public transportation.

Finally, the advisors often added to their recommendations policies designed to increase revenues for the NMSHTD. Increased or better enforced trucking fees were a common theme across the six conference deliberations, and these proposals made it into many of the final recommendations. Advisors also discussed ways in which road funds are transferred back into the general fund, and they surmised that transportation-related fees and taxes might logically go entirely to the State's road fund, rather than into the general fund. In many cases, advisors included these issues in their final recommendations. Underlying these funding schemes was a general concern that the state was not spending enough on roads, and advisors generally expressed a willingness to either (a) pay more fees or taxes if the revenue went to the roads or (b) divert funds from other programs to maintain and improve their state highways.

THE IMPACT OF THE CONFERENCE ON THE PUBLIC

The Citizen Conferences aimed to provide meaningful public input to the NMSHTD, but they also had a secondary purpose of informing the general public about transportation issues in New Mexico. In this final section, we briefly review the impact of the conferences on both the 53 citizen advisors and the New Mexico public as a whole.

HOW THE CONFERENCE AFFECTED PARTICIPANTS

At the Taos conference, one of the audience members spontaneously asked a question that provides insight into the effect of the conference upon the citizen advisors themselves. The audience member said, “I know you probably never thought about this subject in anywhere near the detail you did today.” He then asked, “How would you guess what you say now would compare with what you thought yesterday? Is it the same, or is it different? Does it surprise you that you said these things?” The advisors gave these replies:

- “I wasn’t really educated on this issue before today.”
- “The discussions opened my mind a little bit.”
- “Until people sit down and start brainstorming, they really don’t take a good look at what they’re driving on and the condition the roads are in.”
- “I think a few of us will definitely pay a lot more attention to politics and the news and possibly become more involved. ... At this point, I’m ready to go knock down doors.”
- “It really opened my eyes, too, because I really wasn’t aware of how the State Transportation Department gets its funding, how it’s constrained in how it spends its money. That’s why my plans would be a lot different than how they were yesterday.”

These responses suggest that citizen advisors learned a great deal from the conferences, both about the details of transportation planning and about the real policy dilemmas facing the NMSHTD. More advisor feedback supports this conclusion. Advisors were given the chance to send the IPP written evaluations of the conferences after they concluded (see Appendix D), and some advisors took the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. When asked if they learned anything from their participation, one advisor said, “I learned how difficult it is to keep everybody happy and how everyone wants the chunk of the money to go to them. Also how hard it is to project conditions and solutions into the future.” Another said, “Yes. More money is needed to do a good job of repairing NM Roads. Taxes collected for highways are not all used for highways but used for other purposes.” Another wrote, “Some important things I learned were: 1. The dilemma

of ownership and responsibility of roads between state and county/local governments. 2. The high cost of maintenance and repair of roads.”

These written conference evaluations also suggested that the citizen advisors found the experience to be useful. When asked, “Do you think this kind of conference is a useful way to get public input?” all eleven who answered the question said “yes.” One advisor wrote, “Absolutely! Most town hall type meetings draw only radicals or those with private agendas.” Another said, “The public needs to know about our highways and what is happening to taxes collected for upgrading our highways.” Another wrote, “Yes, I think this kind of conference is very useful to get public input. Roads are very important to the people in every walks of life to travel for work, business, meeting friends and relatives, attending schools, colleges, emergency duties, etc. People should contribute to develop a good road system on which they can depend. This kind of conference needs all the public input to be successful.”

Although only a fraction of the citizen advisors took the time to give written feedback, it was apparent at the close of each conference that the advisors were generally pleased with their role in the event. Some became so involved in the subject that they did not leave the auditorium until long after the conference had ended. Some forgot that they were to receive checks, and a few said that they would have been glad to have participated even without the honorarium. Many commented to the moderator that the conference had been a unique experience in their lives and that they’d never felt so involved in government before. Overall, it was clear that the conferences left advisors with a sense of accomplishment and a very positive feeling toward the intentions and competence of the NMSHTD.

WHAT THE LARGER PUBLIC LEARNED

The conferences undoubtedly had an indirect impact on the friends and family of those advisors who chose to discuss their experience after returning home. But for the conferences to have a broader — if more diffuse — impact, it was necessary to seek media coverage of each conference. Based on our experience with this first set of citizen conferences, it appears that the media most likely to cover a conference are those operating in the town where it takes place, although there were exceptions.

The IPP successfully reached these media by faxing pre-conference press releases one week prior to each conference (see Sample Pre-Conference Press Release in Appendix B), followed by a phone call two to three days before each conference. Once an interested reporter or editor was identified on the phone, he or she usually received another copy of the press release via fax, as the first one was often misplaced or lost. At each conference, a final press release was written by incorporating the conferees’ recommendations into a boiler-plate press release prepared in advance.

After proofreading and correcting this final press release, it was faxed to those media who did not attend the press conference.

Using these techniques, most of the citizen conferences received some form of press coverage (see Appendix B). KUNM-FM (New Mexico Public Radio) did a story before the first conference on the transportation citizen conferences, and in July, the Osgood File (a nationally syndicated radio program) did a short piece on the conferences. The *Albuquerque Journal* and *Albuquerque Tribune* covered the Albuquerque conference, and the *Tribune* later singled out the conference for praise in its weekly “Bouquets and Brickbats” editorial. In Roswell, the conference was covered by a local TV station, a local radio station, and the *Roswell Record*. A Tucumcari radio station reported on the Santa Rosa conference, and the *Las Cruces Sun News*, as well as an El Paso television station, covered the Las Cruces conference. Other papers, such as the *Gallup Independent* and the *Los Alamos Monitor*, said they would cover the conference (the *Independent* even sent a reporter), but apparently the story did not make the final editorial cut.

From these stories, the general public probably learned two things: New Mexicans want to maintain as many highway miles as possible, and the state government was willing to pay citizens to hear their input. More careful readers might have also learned about the conference process and details of the citizen advisors’ recommendations. Although many reporters (and headline editors) found the “paid participation” angle intriguing, the stories generally did report on advisors’ recommendations; those citizens learning about the recommendations through these media accounts may have felt that their own concerns about deteriorating state highways were validated by their advisor-representatives. The general public may have also picked up the implicit message that the NMSHTD cares enough about their views to pay citizens for the time it takes them to formulate meaningful input into the long-range planning process.

APPENDIX A: CITIZEN ADVISOR RECOMMENDATIONS

April 15 (Albuquerque) Citizen Advisor Recommendations

We believe that the State of New Mexico needs to maintain the roads we already have, because roads are the lifeblood of the state economy. Therefore, the Department should follow Choice 1, which extends the life of state highways.

We recommend that the State of New Mexico only reduce the money it spends on highways if counties would accept a reduction in maintenance funds in exchange for control over how those funds are spent. Of the 7,000 miles in Choice 1 that are scheduled to be resurfaced or repaired, the Department should give counties the option of maintaining these roads themselves at a cost lower than the amount the state had budgeted for maintenance of those roads. If counties agree to maintain the roads themselves, the Department should hand the roads over to them and use the savings for other purposes.

A majority of us favor using those savings for safety improvements to the 5,000 miles of most heavily-traveled roads in the state. However, four of us favor using those savings as partial matching funds for any new Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) that form in coming years.

We also recommend that the legislature and governor support efforts to establish RTAs with the ability to put tax increases on the ballot. The State should not stand in the way of RTAs forming.

We believe that Choices 2 and 3 were not as good because they let go of too many miles of highway. Also, Choice 3 asks the state to pay for transit, which is better funded through local and regional government bodies.

April 23 (Gallup) Citizen Advisor Recommendations

We believe that the State of New Mexico should maintain as many of the state roads as possible through resurfacing and repairs. Many state roads need improvements, but first we have to maintain the road system we have. Even the least traveled state roads are still serving a purpose and are important to people living in rural parts of the state. If the state does not maintain these roads, county and tribal governments will not be able to do the maintenance themselves. This policy will bring the most benefit to the most New Mexicans.

If more funding becomes available, the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department should use those funds to better maintain the 4,000 miles of state highways that currently receive only minor repairs. Repaving — instead of merely repairing — many of these roads would make a significant difference in the lives of rural New Mexicans who depend on these minor state highways.

One way of financing the repavement of these roads is to change state law so that the Department can buy goods and services without paying gross receipt taxes. We recognize that this change in the tax law would reduce the State's general fund by as much as \$20 million, but we believe that these funds should remain in the Department to be spent on highway maintenance.

We also recommend that fifty-percent of the motor vehicle excise taxes that the State collects be designated specifically for the Department's budget. If collected, these funds could be used for the same maintenance purposes described above.

Finally, we recommend that the Department only award highway maintenance projects to contractors who warranty their work for a minimum of five years.

April 30 (Roswell) Citizen Advisor Recommendations

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department should use the \$40 million of flexible spending in its annual budget to address the needs of its 7,000 miles of less-traveled highways through new maintenance policies and stricter trucking regulations.

First, the State should follow an intensive road sealing maintenance program for the 2,100 miles of highway that can still benefit from a combination of oil, sand, and chip-sealing. This program should cost the State only \$4 million each year.

Second, the State should spend \$36 million a year to make regular repairs and safety improvements to the 7,000 less-traveled highway miles. Filling in potholes, fixing road signs, and other minor repairs are important, even if they don't maintain the roads indefinitely. Safety improvements, such as better signs and more reflectors, will also significantly improve the quality of these roads.

Third, the State should extend the lives of these roads by reducing the ton-miles of truck traffic on them. We recommend that New Mexico reduce its truck weight limits to bring the State into line with the majority of other states. Also, the fines for violating trucking laws should be raised to the national average. Together, these measures would significantly reduce the total tonnage of truck traffic on New Mexico's most fragile highways.

In addition, we believe that the State of New Mexico should increase the funds it devotes to New Mexico's roads. The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department should not have to pay any portion of the road fund to cover gross receipt taxes or to pay for the services of the Taxation and Revenue Department. This could generate as much as \$28 million in additional annual highway funds that could be used to conduct major maintenance — such as extensive resurfacing — on New Mexico's less-traveled highways.

May 15 (Taos) Citizen Advisor Recommendations

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department should focus on improving its most heavily-traveled state highways and pay for these improvements through a gradual reduction in its maintenance of less critical state roads.

The most pressing transportation issue in New Mexico is the quality of the major highways and interstates that make up the National Highway System. These roads have the most automobile traffic, so they should also be the safest. The Department should spend tens of millions of additional dollars every year on safety improvements for these highways, on top of the regular maintenance and reconstruction projects these roads receive. Straightening roads, widening shoulders, and reducing congestion could significantly reduce the number of accidents and deaths on these highways.

To pay for these improvements, the Department should gradually turn over 3,000 highway miles to New Mexico counties. The State should do this cautiously, however, because the counties may not be able to maintain these roads by themselves. In consultation with county governments, the State will turn over to the counties those roads that have the smallest economic impact and serve the fewest state residents. To assist those counties that wish to maintain these roads, the State will help counties develop strategies for financing continued maintenance on these roads through impact fees on new development, bonding, and other methods.

We also suggest that the Department promote the use of carpools and public transportation. Although the State can not afford to develop these systems given its fiscal constraints, the State can spend \$1 million a year on additional public education efforts, such as public service announcements on radio and television. Local and county governments should develop their own public transportation systems, but the State can use more of its resources to encourage their efforts. For example, when the Department widens roads as part of its safety improvement program, it could make the new lanes “high occupancy vehicle” lanes that promote carpooling and ride sharing. The Department could also study the merits of carpooling incentive programs, such as tax credits.

Finally, we recommend that the State devote substantial resources to improving its enforcement of existing weight-tonnage fees for trucks that travel on State highways. Truck traffic does the most damage to State highways, and it is critical that trucking companies make their full contribution to the maintenance of the roads they use. At a cost of \$48 million spread

over five years, the State could build five stationary truck weigh-stations and four portable ones. These would cost roughly \$9 million each year to maintain, but they could generate as much as \$30 million in additional revenue that is lost to trucks that evade State trucking fees.

May 20 (Santa Rosa) Citizen Advisor Recommendations

We recommend that the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department focus its efforts on improving our state's portion of the National Highway System — the 5,000 most heavily-traveled miles of road in New Mexico. Straightening these roads, adding more passing lanes, widening shoulders, especially on interchanges, and improving bridges will make New Mexico's highways much safer for both cars and trucks. When possible, the Department should even add lanes to those roads that would remain congested even with occasional passing lanes.

We view road improvements as a higher priority than public transit because public transportation is a more local concern. Cities and counties should develop their own transportation systems, as needed. The Department should concern itself with the highways, and it should improve a smaller road network rather than merely maintaining a larger number of roads.

The safety improvements we recommend would cost as much as \$40 million a year, and to pay for these projects, the Department should turn 3,000 miles of state highways over to New Mexico counties. Dirt roads, low-traffic state highways, and city roads should no longer be the responsibility of the State of New Mexico. Counties may choose to maintain these roads, but the State will no longer be responsible for them. In determining which roads the State turns over to counties, the State should take at least two factors into account. First, if state highways are a very large percentage of the paved roads in a county, they should usually remain state roads. Second, remote state highways with a low traffic volume should tend to remain state roads if they are the only means of transporting school children or reaching emergency services.

We also recommend that New Mexico change its trucking regulations so that trucking companies make a larger contribution to the State's road fund. Trucks are important to our economy, but they also do serious damage to state highways. To help pay for this damage, New Mexico's weight-distance fees should be raised significantly. If these new regulations raise additional revenue, the money should go into the road fund.

Finally, a significant percentage of trucks traveling along New Mexico's roads are evading regular weight-distance fees. If the State studied and adopted more modern enforcement technology, it might reduce the number of trucks who use the highways without paying for it.

May 29 (Las Cruces) Citizen Advisor Recommendations

We recommend that the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department continue to focus its efforts on extending the lives of the 12,000 miles of state highway. Even the less-traveled state highways need regular resurfacing and repairs. Keeping these roads in working condition as long as possible is a higher priority than improving the major highways or developing public transit in New Mexico. A minority of us believe that as many as 1,000 state highway miles — especially the hundreds of miles of dirt roads in the state highway network — could be turned over to counties. If this were done, the resulting savings should only be used to extend the reach of the state's highway resurfacing program.

Our hope is that the Department can, in the future, work with a larger budget. Given its current fiscal constraints, the Department can only slow the decay of 7,000 miles of state highways. We believe that the loss of these roads would harm New Mexico's economy and the individual citizens who depend upon the existence of those highways. Regular reconstruction of these roads will cost millions of dollars in additional revenue every year, and we suggest that these funds come from a two or three cent increase in the gasoline tax. The additional gasoline tax could raise as much as \$20-30 million a year, all of which should go into the road fund.

More revenue might also come from increased fees on overweight trucks. A significant portion of the trucks that travel New Mexico highways evade our state's weigh stations, and those that are caught doing so should receive larger fines. Also, those that arrive at weigh stations overweight should get stiffer fines for exceeding weight limits. All of the revenue collected from administering these fines should go into the road fund, and these dollars should be used to reconstruct more highway miles.

Finally, a majority of us think that the Department might make better use of prison labor in its road maintenance projects. If using prison labor proves cost-effective, it should be done.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE AND PRESS CLIPPINGS

Separate press releases were written for each conference but the format was roughly the same for each. The sample shown below was distributed after the conclusion of the Roswell conference.

April 30, 1997

CITIZENS RECOMMEND MAINTAINING LESS-TRAVELED HIGHWAYS THROUGH A NEW RESURFACING PLAN AND STRICTER TRUCK WEIGHT LIMITS

Wednesday a random sample of nine “citizen advisors” from Southeastern New Mexico communities recommended that the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD) focus its long-range transportation plans on maintaining its less-traveled highways and enforcing stricter trucking weight limits on these fragile roads.

The Citizen Conference was a unique public meeting because its main participants were chosen at random by the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy (IPP), which convened the day-long New Mexico Citizen Conference on Transportation. The citizen advisors reached their conclusions after discussing transportation policy with a panel of experts and deliberating among themselves as to which policy would best suit the needs of the state.

The recommendations made by the citizen advisors read as follows: “The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department should use the \$40 million of flexible spending in its annual budget to address the needs of its 7,000 miles of less-traveled highways through new maintenance policies and stricter trucking regulations.

“First, the State should follow an intensive road sealing maintenance program for the 2,100 miles of highway that can still benefit from a combination of oil, sand, and chip-sealing. This program should cost the State only \$4 million each year.

“Second, the State should spend \$36 million a year to make regular repairs and safety improvements to the 7,000 less-traveled highway miles. Filling in potholes, fixing road signs, and other minor repairs are important, even if they don’t maintain the roads indefinitely. Safety improvements, such as better signs and more reflectors, will also significantly improve the quality of these roads.

“Third, the State should extend the lives of these roads by reducing the ton-miles of truck traffic on them. We recommend that New Mexico reduce its truck weight limits to bring the State into line with the majority of other states. Also, the fines for violating trucking laws should be raised to the national average. Together, these measures would significantly reduce the total tonnage of truck traffic on New Mexico’s most fragile highways.

“In addition, we believe that the State of New Mexico should increase the funds it devotes to New Mexico’s roads. The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department should not have to pay any portion of the road fund to cover gross receipt taxes or to pay for the services of the Taxation and Revenue Department. This could generate as much as \$28 million in additional annual highway funds that could be used to conduct major maintenance — such as extensive resurfacing — on New Mexico’s less-traveled highways.”

The Institute for Public Policy (IPP) will hold three more New Mexico Citizen Conferences on Transportation, sponsored by the NMSHTD. Conferences were previously held in Albuquerque (April 15) and Gallup (April 23), and the remaining Conferences will be held in Taos (May 15), Santa Rosa (May 20), and Las Cruces (May 29). For more information, contact the Institute for Public Policy’s Conference Coordinator, Anne Landy, or Research Manager, John Gastil, at 277-1099.

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Albuquerque Tribune (April 15, 1997), p. A3

Albuquerque Journal (April 16, 1997), p. C2

Albuquerque Tribune (April 22, 1997), editorial page

Roswell Daily Record (May 1, 1997), p. 1/a

Las Cruces Sun-News (May 30, 1997), p. A1

“The Osgood File” (July 4, 1997)

The following is a transcript of CBS Radio’s nationally syndicated program, “The Osgood File.”

Charles Osgood: The Osgood Files, sponsored in part by Deloit and Teuth. I’m Charles Osgood. As you know, part of living in a democracy means that you’re supposed to get involved in what your government is doing. We’re supposed to be government of, for, and by the people, and the people are supposed to be heard from.

Antoinette Mann: If we keep going at status quo, the Highway Department won’t be able to keep up with the repairs and keep things maintained to where we have a road system.

Osgood: One way to get citizens involved, after this from Deloit and Teuth, one of America’s leading Professional Services Firm.

[BREAK FOR ADVERTISEMENT]

Osgood: In New Mexico, the fifth largest state, there’s lots of traffic, and driving is a way of life. And there are lots of roads to take care of.

Jim Kozak: We have twice as many miles in our road system as Utah or as Nevada.

Osgood: But State Transportation official Jim Kozak says its rare, even here, that folks help to plan their road systems. People may have great ideas about how their tax dollars should be spent, but most of them are too busy to think about things like installing a stop light or fixing a bridge.

Mann: Most people don’t stop to think about the highway department or the Department of Transportation.

Osgood: Antonette Mann is from Los Alamos.

Mann: And they don’t stop and think about what’s going on — and about the maintenance and the cost.

Osgood: But recently Ms. Mann got a chance to voice her opinion about New Mexico roads. How? Well, the State is paying ordinary citizens two hundred dollars a day to attend special forums.

Mann: At least we’re having some sort of say or input, where before you didn’t. They would just go and do something without citizen input.

- Osgood: Even though they entice attendance by paying people to participate, some feel that those running things in the long run really aren't going to pay very much attention to them anyway.
- Mann: Somebody might say, 'Well they're not gonna listen to me. They're not going to hear what I have to say.' But when they see these processes continuing, I think you're definitely gonna get them more involved in it.
- Anonymous: There's gonna be less people driving. That means the roads won't be deteriorating as fast.
- Osgood: The sessions are moderated by John Gastil, a Public Policy expert at the University of New Mexico. Citizens are randomly selected to get a good cross-section, and Transportation experts help them to frame the issues.
- John Gastil: Participating in a citizens conference significantly changes the way people understand themselves as citizens, and they still think, 'Well, if this happened once, why couldn't it happen again?' They see it as this new possibility for civic engagement.
- Mann: We vote and we pay taxes, but we often don't know where it goes and what happens. And this really opened our eyes.
- Osgood: The Osgood Files. I'm Charles Osgood on the CBS Radio Network.

APPENDIX C: RECRUITING SCRIPT

QUESTION 1

May I speak to «NAME»?

[WHEN SPEAKING TO «NAME»]

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from the University of New Mexico. We are conducting a very brief follow-up to a University of New Mexico survey that you participated in a year ago. As before, your answers to our questions will remain confidential. The University releases no information as to how any particular individual answers the survey. Would you complete a very brief survey with me?

QUESTION 2

If you had to choose from the following categories, what would you say is the single, biggest problem facing people in New Mexico today? Is it:

[READ OPTIONS, DON'T READ THE DK/NA]

- 1 Jobs and the economy
- 2 Crime
- 3 Public Education
- 4 Drug abuse
- 5 Environmental Quality
- 6 Public health care
- 99 DK/NA

QUESTION 3

Do you believe that this problem New Mexico faces is a bigger problem, a smaller problem, or about the same in the rest of the United States?

- 3 Bigger
- 1 Smaller
- 2 About the same
- 99 DK/NA

QUESTION 4

What city or town do you live in?

«Text Variable»

QUESTION 5

Do you ever assist with transportation planning for a city, a county, the State of New Mexico, or a federal government agency?

[IF YES, DISCONTINUE INTERVIEW]

[To Discontinue say, "Thank you. I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. Have a good day."]

QUESTION 6

Are you a full-time student at a college or university?

[IF YES, CHECK QUOTA SHEET. DISCONTINUE INTERVIEW IF A FULL-TIME STUDENT HAS ALREADY AGREED TO PARTICIPATE.]

[To Discontinue say, "Thank you. I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. Have a good day."]

QUESTION 7

Thank you for answering our questions. Based on the answers you have provided, I would like to invite you to participate in a public meeting sponsored by the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy.

The Institute is holding a day-long Citizen Conference in Las Cruces on Thursday, May 29th, and we are randomly selecting just ten average New Mexicans like yourself to participate. The conference will last a full day, and the University of New Mexico will pay you \$200 for participating.

The conference does not involve any sales or promotions, and if you choose to participate, you will NOT be asked to buy anything.

May I briefly describe the event so you can decide whether or not to participate?

QUESTION 8

You probably have never heard of a Citizens Conference because the conference is a new form of public meeting created by the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy. A Citizens Conference brings together a small group of citizens like yourself who are paid to discuss an important public issue and make recommendations to the government. During the conference, you will have the chance to talk with fellow New Mexicans, as well as a panel of

experts. At the end of the conference, the citizen participants will make recommendations to the State of New Mexico. These recommendations may appear in the newspaper or on the television news. The conference will last a full day, and the University of New Mexico will pay you \$200 for participating. The University will provide snacks and serve you a catered lunch at noon. You will also have the chance to take breaks throughout the day.

We hope that you will be able to participate in the Citizens Conference because we want a truly random sample of the people living in your community, and you are one of the few people we chose to contact. The conference will be held on Thursday, May 29th, from 9am to 5pm, at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. Would you be able to attend the Conference?

[To Discontinue say, "Thank you. I appreciate you taking the time to talk. Have a good day."] [If asked about the conference topic, say that you do not want the topic to influence their decision to participate. You can reassure them that the topic is not highly controversial, and you will reveal it later if they agree to participate.]

QUESTION 9

In order to send you materials and contact you later, the Institute for Public Policy will need some information from you. This information will not be given out for any other purpose. First, may I have your first and last name?

[BE SURE TO CONFIRM SPELLING]

«Text Variable»

QUESTION 10

What is your mailing address?

[EXAMPLE: 1212 Truman Road SE / Albuquerque, NM 87108]

[CONFIRM NUMBERS AND SPELLING]

«Text Variable»

QUESTION 11

We will be calling back later to remind you of the conference. During the week, when would be the best time of day to call you?

[If evening is not a good time to call, we can call during the daytime]

«Text Variable»

QUESTION 12

The telephone number we have for you is «NUMBER» . Is that the best number to reach you?
«Text Variable»

QUESTION 13

Very soon, the Institute for Public Policy will send you detailed instructions on how to get to New Mexico State University, as well as other details about the Conference.

The participants in the Citizens Conference come from all walks of life. Some participants may have difficulty reading printed material or are too busy to read. Would you like us to call back later and provide you with more information over the phone, or would you rather we sent you printed material through the mail?

- 1 Contact me by phone
- 0 Send materials through the mail

QUESTION 14

Also, some participants in the Citizens Conference have special needs, such as those participants using wheelchairs or those who have restricted diets. Do you have any special needs or dietary restrictions that you would like the conference organizers to take into account?

«Text Variable»

QUESTION 15

Now that you have agreed to participate, I can tell you that the topic of the Conference is transportation in New Mexico. You already know a great deal about this issue because it is something that you deal with every day.

At the Conference, you and your fellow citizens will discuss the issue and make recommendations to the State Government on how to address New Mexico's transportation problems. What the State needs to learn is how average citizens like yourself think about transportation. We do not expect you to have studied the issue.

If you have any more questions or should anything prevent you from attending please call Anne Landy, the Conference Coordinator. Her number in Albuquerque is 277-1099.

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today. We look forward to seeing you in Las Cruces on May 29th. Good-bye.

APPENDIX D: CITIZEN ADVISOR FEEDBACK

Advisors had the opportunity to give feedback to the Institute for Public Policy on the Citizen Conferences. Only a few advisors chose to send back the conference evaluation forms, and their responses are shown below.

QUESTION 1. DID YOU LEARN ENOUGH ABOUT TRANSPORTATION ISSUES TO MAKE USEFUL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT?

1. Yes I did. I learned how difficult it is to keep everybody happy and how everyone wants the chunk of the money to go to them. Also how hard it is to project conditions and solutions into the future.

2. Yes. More money is needed to do a good job of repairing NM Roads. Taxes collected for highways are not all used for highways but used for other purposes.

3. I learned much about transportation. I guess you would have to ask the State Highway and Transportation Department if our recommendations were useful or not. Some important things I learned was: 1. The dilemma of ownership and responsibility of roads between state and county/local governments. 2. The high cost of maintenance and repair of roads.

4. Number of miles of highway, amount of money spent, and the role of the highway department.

5. I learned a great deal about transportation, yet I do not feel my recommendations are totally educated. I looked at the map for proposed referrals of state roads to counties and made recommendations which might help my particular county.

6. Yes. I feel that I learned a significant amount of information for the recommendations. One of the most important things I learned was how roads are picked for reconstruction or even handing down to counties.

7. Yes, I learned just enough to make a few useful recommendations to New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD). One of the most important things I learned was that certain portions of the road funds allocated to NMSHTD were often diverted to other general areas according to the need and also to the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department to cover gross receipt taxes or to pay for their services. No wonder the roads in NM were not improving as compared to the roads of the sister states, although NM has enough gas, mineral, and agricultural resources.

8. Yes. I learned the overall operations of the Transportation Department.

9. Yes. That New Mexico has more roads and less population than AZ, NV, and UT. I also see no solution taking into account the funds available to improve our roads to any significant degree.

10. Yes. I felt that the monies designated for transportation should go to transportation rather than part being sent into the general fund.

11. Resources are limited, so priorities must be set far in advance to keep the ever increasing flow of traffic moving.

QUESTION 2. DO YOU THINK THIS KIND OF CONFERENCE IS A USEFUL WAY TO GET PUBLIC INPUT?

1. Yes.
2. Yes. The public needs to know about our highways and what is happening to taxes collected for upgrading our highways.
3. Yes, although it seemed like one day is a short amount of time to assimilate all the information which relates to transportation. I find it difficult to believe that the advisors, such as myself, with only one day to discuss the transportation issue, can offer significantly useful input to the experts (engineers, planners, etc.) who work for the State Highway and Transportation Department.
4. I felt that the variety of opinions were healthy to provide useful input.
5. I believe this kind of conference is useful to get public input if utilized. I feel I should have gone to the county commissioners prior to the conference to get input for recommendations.
6. Yes, because we (the common folks) have a say. Our questions are answered, its not all written words. It's what we perceive and hear and it's not all perfect and prewritten.
7. Yes, I think this kind of conference is very useful to get public input. Roads are very important to the people in every walks of life to travel for work, business, meeting friends and relatives, attending schools, colleges, emergency duties, etc. People should contribute to develop a good road system on which they can depend. This kind of conference needs all the public input to be successful.
8. Yes, very useful.
9. Absolutely.
10. Yes. Rather than small groups that have a specific interest in one project that may effect them only.
11. Absolutely! Most town hall type meetings draw only radicals or those with private agendas.

QUESTION 3. DID PARTICIPATING IN THE CONFERENCE CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT STATE GOVERNMENT OR YOUR ROLE IN PUBLIC DECISION MAKING?

1. Yes it did.
2. Yes. State government needs to let the public know specifically how taxes collected for highways are spent.
3. I am pleased that State Government is soliciting input from the public (non-special interest). I hope we have made some contribution to the process or presented useful ideas.
4. No. I had a good feeling about governments role. I still feel that privatization of road projects are not necessary. The best or cheapest way to repair roads.
5. I appreciate the fact that I was asked for my opinion; yet I feel state government will do what it deems necessary to get the job done. Unless I had a particular interest in a specific matter. I do not feel an individual can actually influence decisions unless that person is politically motivated.
6. In a way. We can't do anything about how people or the legislature votes but we can at least let our opinions be of value to those who want to learn it.
7. Participating in this conference, my thinking about the state government has shifted toward more optimistic side. With the excellent staff, engineers, director and consultants, NMSHTD should have more ambitious planning to improve the road system, bring more innovations, more private entrepreneurs to develop public transit system, attract tourists and coordinate rail road and highway systems. It's per my role in public decisions making, I felt privileged and honored to exert my citizenship rights toward right direction.

8. I know that the state government has and hires the best knowledgeable people and many New Mexicans are aware of what is being done for this state.

9. Yes.

10. Yes. I'm a little disturbed about the Santa Fe by pass. If a relatively small group of land developers are holding up progress on its completion. The Transportation Department should have had these problems worked out before starting the project.

11. Yes, it did convince me that the public has to become involved in the issues or the radicals and self serving people will be the only voices heard.

QUESTION 4. DO YOU THINK THAT CITIZEN CONFERENCES WOULD BE MORE USEFUL IF THEY WERE DONE DIFFERENTLY? WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

1. I think this was a well done conference.

2. The conference was well conducted and the proper information was given to the participants and citizens advisors came up with solutions they thought were appropriate. I can't think of any way I would change the conference.

3. It would be useful to distribute more reading material to the advisers before the conference. I'm sure it would not be read by all advisers but, I would have liked more. The facilitator/moderator was a little too lenient on keeping all advisers focused on the issues we were supposed to address. Some advisers did not address the pertinent issues with their questions to the panel and this used up valuable time. The facilitator did keep people on track somewhat but, could have done a little more.

4. Provide the fact book ahead of time. Do not change the format.

5. In our small community citizens, again, get involved if they are affected by decisions to be made. I feel this conference was well planned and organized. Citizens who participate need to know in advance the format of the conference. Audience needs to know that citizens were truly randomly selected and not in attendance for a particular agenda. I felt on the defense at the time of the press conference. I think it would be helpful to have a follow up specific ideas, and see that all local papers receive information concerning the conference, i.e. Harding Co. Leader, 15 N. 1st. Clayton, NM. Thanks!

6. Actually I think it was done pretty well. The panel was ok, we had enough people there to answer questions but more "professionals" in the areas would help in case someone doesn't have an answer.

7. Yes, the citizen conference would be more useful if sufficient time was given for certain issues difficult to solve but surmountable. The moderation dominated mostly on the budget which was very much constrained. More cooperation was needed among the advisers, coordinator and the moderator. The citizen conference on the whole was very useful and I express my deep appreciation to the UNM Institute for Public Policy.

8. No, the way it was done yesterday was very much ample enough, maybe a two day conference might be better. it was a great day. thank you all for picking me, even if it was done randomly.

9. Giving the citizens a little more information on what will be happening and how.

10. Same time (am) could have been saved by having more detail on what was being done and what the major projects are for the next year or so.

11. I can not think of any changes that I feel would improve the setting. I just wonder if our recommendations will really be considered.

