

Meeting set to discuss Paseo improvements downtown

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The New Mexico Department of Transportation is holding an open meeting Dec. 1 to discuss improvement options for Paseo del Pueblo between La Posta Road and Camino de la Placita.

The meeting will take place at the Taos Town Council Chambers on Civic Plaza Drive. It will start with an open house at 6 p.m. and a presentation at 6:15 p.m.

The meeting is meant to provide an update on a the design of road work in an area that includes the heart of the historic district.

The state of New Mexico has set aside more than \$11.5 million in funds for a makeover of several miles of Paseo del Pueblo, starting in Ranchos de Taos and ending as far north as the northern intersection with Camino de la Placita.

The first project phase would go from the intersection with NM 518 to La Posta Road, and would mostly include asphalt rehabilitation, sidewalk and bike lane improvements, and better drainage control. That phase is expected to begin construction sometime in 2017. The second phase is expected to start at La Posta Road and go north as far as funding will allow.

To date, proposed improvements include adding a stoplight at Albright Street. Also under consideration is a proposal to widen the road from two lanes with a center lane to four lanes (two northbound, two southbound) from La Posta to the intersection with Los Pandos Road.

Additionally, the second project phase includes pavement rehabilitation, sidewalk improvements, the addition of bike lanes or bike share lanes and possibly landscaping.

A news release on the Dec. 1 meeting makes no mention of an alternative that had been proposed by consultants working on the project — the long controversial “one-way pair.”

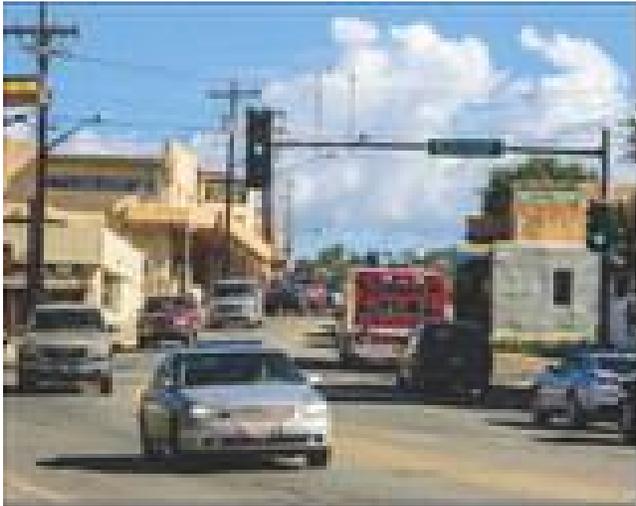
For decades, some traffic engineers have suggested converting part of Paseo del Pueblo into northbound-only, while Camino de la Placita would become two lanes for traffic headed southbound. Some traffic models have found that this so-called one-way pair would improve the efficiency of moving traffic through the downtown bottleneck.

However, critics of the plan — especially some downtown merchants — say the plan would make it unnecessarily difficult to navigate the historic district and would effect business for retailers and restaurants.

The consultants working on the existing traffic study did find that the oneway pair was the most effective way to move traffic, but acknowledged that it is not the most socially sensitive solution and may be too controversial to implement.

For more information on the meeting, contact Eric Johnson with Marron and Associates at (505) 898-8848 or email eric@marroninc.com.

For more information on the project itself,
visit dot.state.nm.us/content/nmdot/en/ProjectsD5.html.



The bottleneck in the center of Taos' historic district has been a challenging and so-far unsolvable puzzle for traffic engineers for decades.

Katharine Egli

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