



THE TAOS NEWS

Best U.S. Weekly Paper- NNA 2007, 2008, 2010
Inland Press Nation's Best Weekly Newspaper 2009

Paseo facelift meeting scheduled for Jan. 11

By **Jesse Moya**, *jmoya@taosnews.com*

The Taos News, 1/4/2018

Imagine the possibility of a traffic light on Albright Street to make left-hand turns with ease onto busy Paseo del Pueblo Sur or perhaps even a roundabout to allow a continuous flow of traffic. What if Los Pandos and Siler Roads met without having a bend in the intersection with Paseo and the impossible task of turning across traffic? All this and more could be in the road construction future for Paseo del Pueblo, the main drag through Taos.

The Federal Highway Administration and the New Mexico Department of Transportation will hold a public information meeting on the State Road 68 - U.S. 64 roadway project at 6 p.m. Thursday (Jan. 11) at the Taos County Commission chambers. The agencies will discuss the many planned improvements along Paseo del Pueblo with proposed signal coordination as well as roadway widening and other improvements to the road through the Taos historic district.

Shop owners, Taos County, Taos Pueblo, town of Taos officials and the public have all voiced their opinions about the corridor study, which includes possible new traffic lights, roundabouts as well as other amenities to ease traffic problems on the congested road. The study also looks at possible reworkings of the drainage system and seeks to update the stretch of road from La Posta Road to Camino De La Placita by widening it, adding sidewalks and potentially adding a bike lane.

According to a June 2014 study report by the Souder, Miller and Associates for the NMDOT, "The purpose of the proposed improvements is to correct existing physical deficiencies, facilitate traffic flow and operations, improve traffic safety conditions, manage access to adjoining properties and develop appropriate facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians."

Proposed reconstructions will be from a three-lane to a four-lane highway from south of Los Pandos Road to La Posta Road as well as reconstruction of the existing three-lane and two-lane portions of the highway. The 2014 report suggests that the sidewalks along much of this corridor are in need of repair and that not all current bike lanes and sidewalks are compliant with federal Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. State officials in the past have said working in the area provides a challenge due to the construction restrictions within historical districts and the inability to change the layout. However, the study indicates that many aspects of the roadway are graded at a "fair" condition below "excellent" and "good".

In addition to remodeling and renovating the roads, the report looks at the various drainage systems along the stretch of road and acknowledges that some of them fill with debris easily after storms and create a flooding hazard for traffic. The state report also recommends revisiting the drainage systems to protect the water in the area from street contaminants in the runoff.

"I'm excited about it. It's a huge project that's desperately needed," said Taos council member George "Fritz" Hahn. "As the road is repaired, DOT has agreed to put in a number of bioswales to filter out road drainage and let water percolate back into the earth."

Bioswales are drainage systems used to filter out road waste like silt and oils from water drainage on roads. Hahn, who has been instrumental in the revitalization and protection of water and aquias in Taos, said the NMDOT has been willing to listen to the citizens' concerns about water.

Safety was another concern addressed in the road study. According to the report, from 2009 to 2011 a total of 241 crashes occurred on the studied stretch of highway resulting in 63 injuries and one fatality. A majority of these crashes occurred either because drivers followed too close to another vehicle or due to driver inattention.

Various improvements and renovation propositions will be available for the public to see at the hearing, and staff will be available to answer questions from the community. From October 2013 to April 2014, meetings were held with various public and government groups regarding the study. The meetings brought out comments, questions, concerns and suggestions for the proposed changes, which were added to the report.

No cost has been laid out for the proposed project as nothing has been finalized by the state. The road project does not fall under the jurisdiction of the town of Taos or Taos County and will be constructed and monitored by the NMDOT. Similar studies have been conducted in the past beginning with a Taos bypass study by the NMDOT in 1974. The state has not given a proposed start or completion date for the project.

Both departments are encouraging the public to attend and give comments and feedback on the proposed designs. Those unable to attend the open house and public meeting are able to send their comments by January 25 to Eric Johnson at eric@marroninc.com or call (505) 8988848.

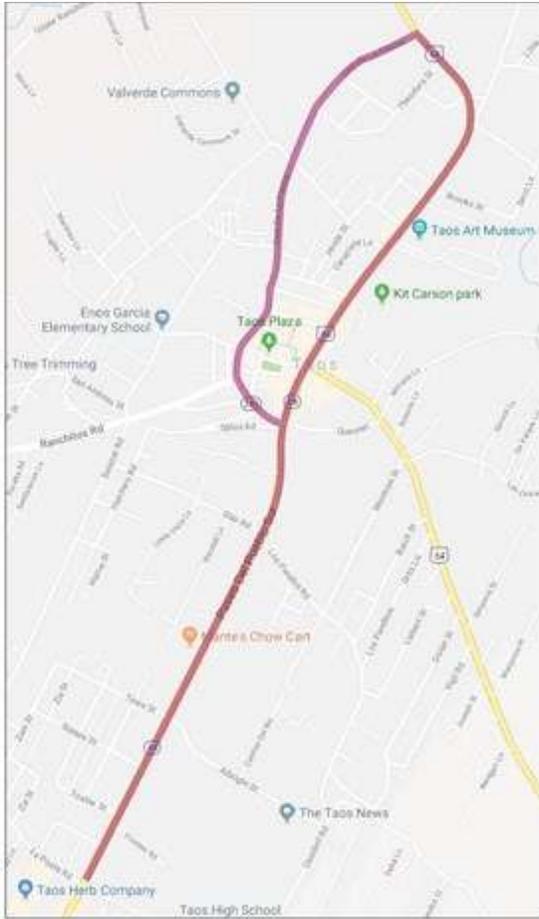
fatali-
ashes
driv-
noth-
inat-

s and
i will
lic to
staff
swer
amu-
13 to
held
gov-
g the
ought
, con-
r the
were

ut for
noth-
y the
es not
on of
Joun-
d and
IDOT.
i con-
ning
y the
e has
art or
proj-

are
ic to
nents
pro-
nable
e and
send
ry 25

mar-



The pink line indicates the route of proposed construction for the NM68-US64 roadway project.
The black line indicates the route of proposed construction for the Taos Plaza area.
Andy Nicolais The Taos News