

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN || MARCH 2024



PREPARED FOR:
NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NM HIGHWAY 136 INTERCHANGE FEASIBILITY STUDY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) has initiated the **Phase IA/B Study, NM 136 MP 0 (Port of Entry) to MP 9.2 (New Mexico/Texas State Line) (CN E100430)**. The Phase 1A/B Study will be prepared in accordance with the latest edition of the NMDOT Location Study Procedures: A Guidebook for Alignment and Corridor Studies and the latest edition of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guidelines. For readability and to support public awareness, this study will be referred to as the **NM 136 Interchange Feasibility Study**.

The Study area, Figure 1, is the NM-136 (Pete V. Dominci Blvd.) Corridor which begins at Mile Marker 0 at the International Border Crossing/Port of Entry (POE) US/Mexico border and continues north approximately 6 miles before turning east for the last 3 miles where it meets the NM/TX state line. The road continues into El Paso as Texas Route 178 (Artcraft Rd.). NM 136 is classified as a primary arterial rural roadway and is an access-controlled roadway with a 24-foot median, 4 to 12-foot travel lanes, a 4-foot inside shoulder, and an 8-foot outside shoulder. There are no access control restrictions between the POE and the first ¼ Mile, access is restricted for the rest of the corridor with access control breaks being spaced at approximately 1 mile apart to allow reasonable access to the adjacent properties.

NM 136 is a 4-lane arterial that facilitates both international and interstate commerce and drives economic development in Doña Ana County and the state overall. The study is looking at proposed locations for interchanges along NM 136 and developing configurations to allow for free-flow movement of traffic.

The primary purpose of the study is to evaluate grade separated intersection layouts at existing access control breaks and consider the possibility of frontage roads as needed. The need is based on potential operational and safety issues, lack of connectivity, and limitations to economic development.

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is a dynamic document that will evolve as the study progresses. It is expected that new issues will be identified as the public becomes informed and involved in the process. Methods to involve the public may also change to maximize outreach and to provide the best opportunities for input. Ultimately, the PIP strives to incorporate public involvement and active stakeholder and agency participation into the study development process; thus, producing transportation projects that fit within the context of a community, provide visual enhancements where possible, and respond to the needs of the community and traveling public.

Figure 1: Study Area



II.GOALS OF THIS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

1. Provide Safety for Users and Community

NM 136 is 4-lane arterial corridor that runs between the Mexico/US border and the New Mexico/Texas state line. The study is looking at the feasibility of adding interchanges along NM 136 to allow for free-flow movement of traffic and would accommodate future travel demands, an increase in heavy commercial truck traffic, and support economic development.

The stakeholders and study team will consider issues such as areas with unacceptable traffic flow or emergency response time and areas where the roadway connectivity is limited. This information will be verified with NMDOT and through the traffic study process. The screening criteria will incorporate these needs to be sure that they are adequately addressed. The feasibility analysis will take into account the anticipated needs.

A crash analysis of the corridor will be performed to determine if there are any significant safety concerns and to determine if any of the potential interchange improvements can improve or mitigate any safety problems that might exist. The Highway Safety Manual will be used as the guideline for completing this safety study and analysis. The NMDOT will provide 5-year crash data for the corridor. The crash data will be used to evaluate crash history and identify patterns, types, and rates, but excludes predictive crash modeling and analysis.

2. Address Community and Social Issues

The study team and stakeholders will identify community and social issues related to the existing roadway network. It is expected that issues may include capacity, safety, connectivity problems, and economic development. NM 136 provides connectivity between the Santa Teresa Port of Entry and Interstate 10 and allows for access and mobility for the industrial commerce surrounding the port of entry. Stakeholder input will be integrated with the study team recommendations. The feasibility analysis will take into account community and social issues.

3. Maintain Environmental Harmony

The study team will perform an inventory of the existing environmental resources for the corridor. The environmental evaluation will consist of records and literature research. The research will include hazardous materials, cultural resources, wetlands, noise, and biological resources. This information will be used to evaluate potential alternatives and to determine if there are any fatal flaws with the alternatives developed.

4. Promote Livability

Land use in the region is –primarily undeveloped with industrial and border-related trade businesses that access the corridor. Residential development is to the east and connected primarily with the City of Sunland Park.

Doña Ana County’s Plan 2040 Comprehensive Plan cites a need for more transportation choices, “Transportation (plans) should connect with other goals, including those that address, for instance, affordability, community health and economic development.”

The New Mexico South Central Council of Governments’ Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027 sets a goal to diversify their regional economy by investing in infrastructure to support private investment and job creation, including transportation facilities.

5. Create Lasting Value for Community

The NM 136 Interchange Feasibility Study aims to enhance a corridor that will have lasting value for nearby communities, residents of southern Doña Ana County, and all roadway users. The proposed enhancements will likely need to last a minimum of 30 years with typical maintenance. The proposed improvements are expected to provide better access and connectivity for local users and regional traffic. The ideal roadway should provide improved capacity, connectivity, emergency response time and safety. The proposed changes should also respond to community preferences and be aesthetically appealing and enhance businesses and residences experiences.

6. Use Agency and Community Resources Effectively

Agency resources will primarily come from the NMDOT State Road Fund, as noted in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). These resources will consist of funding and technical skills used to develop an improved roadway. During the study development and design process, costs and technical requirements will be reviewed and revised to ensure that the proposed changes use funding and technical resources effectively. Likewise, the proposed roadway changes should not result in unforeseen costs incurred by NMDOT. The proposed interchanges will be designed to ensure that local communities, Doña Ana County, or NMDOT are not required to invest resources to repair adjacent properties or infrastructure as a result of the study. Proposed interchanges should benefit adjoining properties and existing infrastructure by:

- Enhancing the connection with local and regional roadways
- Ensuring continued access to adjoining properties
- Providing pedestrian and bicycle facilities and ADA compliance, as appropriate
- Consider opportunities for regional and local transit connections
- Adjusting utility infrastructure to ensure proper operations
- Accommodating future land development and infrastructure projects

III. STUDY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

NM 136 lies on the West Mesa of the Mesilla Valley, a productive agricultural area that also includes the major urban areas of El Paso, Texas; Ciudad Juárez, Mexico; and Las Cruces, New Mexico as well as the smaller communities of the City of Sunland Park and the census designated place (CDP) identified as Santa Teresa. These communities are served by I-10, NM 136, and NM 273 that provide access, connectivity and mobility for the region and are the major traffic carriers for the transportation network.

1. Landscape and Environmental

The terrain and land uses that make up the area surrounding NM 136 have two distinct characteristics. The area west of NM 136 is on top of the escarpment where the terrain is very flat. There is currently minimal development in this area, but development plans have the potential for significant growth opportunities. A Union Pacific Railroad line lies at the base of the escarpment.

The area east of NM 136 is located within the watershed of the Rio Grande, and somewhat follows, NM 273. Natural vegetation is Chihuahuan desert scrub and is present west of and along the escarpment. Wetland habitat, nor waterways, are expected within the study area. It will be important to evaluate erosion and sedimentation in the study. Further east, below the escarpment and adjacent to NM 273, there is established residential development with some commercial sites located within the City of Sunland Park.

2. Historic

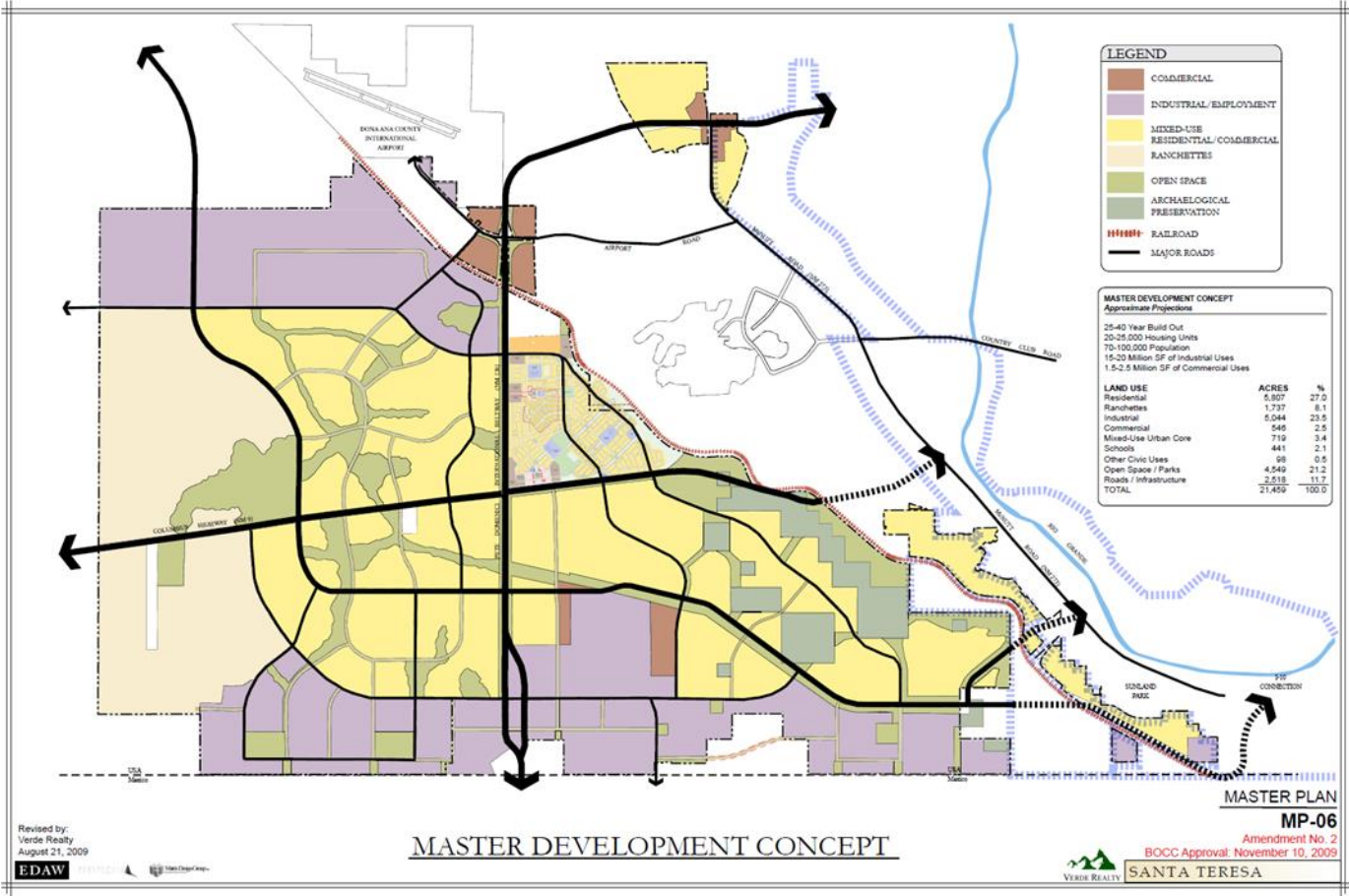
Interchange options are expected to have an expanded footprint; therefore, archaeological surveys will be completed during Phase C of project development. Avoidance and/or mitigation will be applied to eliminate or minimize impacts to historic sites.

3. Land Use

Current land use activities, including major destinations, within the study area can be largely designated as industrial and residential. Falling within the industrial designation are Doña Ana County International Jetport, Union Pacific Strauss Road Railyard, and several trucking/industrial warehouses.

The current residential development is tied to the communities of Santa Teresa and Sunland Park with some residential use along NM 136. Considerable vacant land is currently slated for future residential development and is privately owned. The undeveloped land to the east, however, is master planned for residential and commercial as approved by the Board of County Commissioners in November of 2009 and shown below. The expected increase in border-related industries and the potential development of the vacant land will likely affect the travel demand on the existing and future transportation network.

Figure 2: Verde Master Plan, 2009



4. Economics and Income

The local economy of Santa Teresa, Sunland Park, and nearby communities is largely supported by industrial facilities, farming, agriculture, and services for the traveling public. The location of the Doña Ana County International Jetport and the Union Pacific Strauss Road Railyard in relation to both Santa Teresa and Sunland Park allows for an increase in accessibility to and from both areas. The location of these areas along NM 273 and surrounded by NM 136, Artcraft Rd, and I-10 provide access to employment areas, though the access is not direct. According to the Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance, The Santa Teresa Port of Entry (POE) is located 42 miles south of New Mexico’s second largest city, Las Cruces, and 20 minutes from historic downtown El Paso, Texas. From the POE, Interstate 10 is 12 miles north via NM 136, a multi-lane transportation link to border-related industrial businesses in Southern New Mexico.

With little congestion and short lines, the Santa Teresa POE, via its sister port at San Jeronimo is the premier driving route to and from southern Ciudad Juarez, Ciudad Chihuahua, and the interior of Mexico. The POE has the advantage being in the twelve mile overweight cargo zone which allows trucks from Mexico to carry 96,000 lbs. within the zone for distribution throughout North America.

In the past years, the POE processed approximately 81,339 commercial trucks. Open daily for commercial, non-commercial, and pedestrian traffic, Santa Teresa is the newest port of entry on the US/Mexico border. The state-of-the art facilities were completed in 1997, replacing the original port, which opened in 1992.

Homes near the study area are predominantly owner-occupied with 68 percent in New Mexico, 65 percent in Doña Ana County, 72 percent in Santa Teresa, and 74 percent owner occupancy in Sunland Park (see Table 1). Incomes near the study area are lower than comparable state income. Median family income is \$51,928 in Doña Ana County and \$53,121 in Santa Teresa, but only \$32,936 in Sunland Park. The median family income in New Mexico is \$62,611. Poverty rates in the study area are slightly higher than the state’s rate. The family poverty rate is 24% in Doña Ana County, 23% percent in Santa Teresa, and 25% percent in Sunland Park, compared to 24% percent in New Mexico. Based on incomes and poverty rates, areas near the study area are a potential community of concern for environmental justice. (see Table 1)

Table 1: Housing and Income

Characteristic	New Mexico	Doña Ana County	Santa Teresa CDP	Sunland Park
Housing				
Owner-Occupied	68%	65%	72%	74%
Renter-Occupied	32%	35%	28%	26%
Income and Poverty				
Median Family Income	\$62,611	\$51,928	\$53,121	\$32,936
Family Poverty Rate	24%	24%	23%	25%
Per Capita Income	\$27,945	\$22,772	\$23,548	\$17,715
Unemployment Rate (16 years and older)	6.6%	7.7%	2.7%	5.2%

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016-2020)

5. Community Demographics and Environmental Justice

Santa Teresa is a census-designated place in far southeastern Doña Ana County. Sunland Park is a city located just south of Santa Teresa and sits on the borders of Texas and the Mexican state of Chihuahua, with Ciudad Juárez adjoining it on the south and El Paso, Texas on the east. Las Cruces is located to the north of both communities, and El Paso, TX and Mexico lie to the south. At the time of the decennial census in 2020, Santa Teresa had a population of 6,553, Sunland Park had a population of 17,581, and New Mexico had a population of 2,097,021 with 217,696 people residing in Doña Ana County (see Table 2).

Table 2: Community Demographics

Characteristic	New Mexico	Doña Ana County	Santa Teresa CDP	Sunland Park
2020 Population	2,117,522	219,561	5,044	16,702
Total Population	2,097,021	217,696	6,553	17,581
Median Age	38.1	33.3	33.0	31.3
Percent under 18 Years	23.1%	24.6%	28.6%	32.8%
Percent over 64 Years	17.4%	15.7%	14.3%	12.8%
Total Population Change Percentage (2010-2020)	2.83%	4.94%	23.83%	16.13%
Race/Minority Population (2016-2020)				
Hispanic/Latino	1,010,811	147,672	4,097	15,553
White (Non-Hispanic)	772,952	59,749	819	889
Black/African American	38,330	3,172	42	64
American Indian/Alaska Native	188,610	1,463	10	17

Asian	35,261	2,458	19	37
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1,451	115	3	4
Some Other Race	10,340	839	14	68
Multi Race	59,767	4,093	40	70

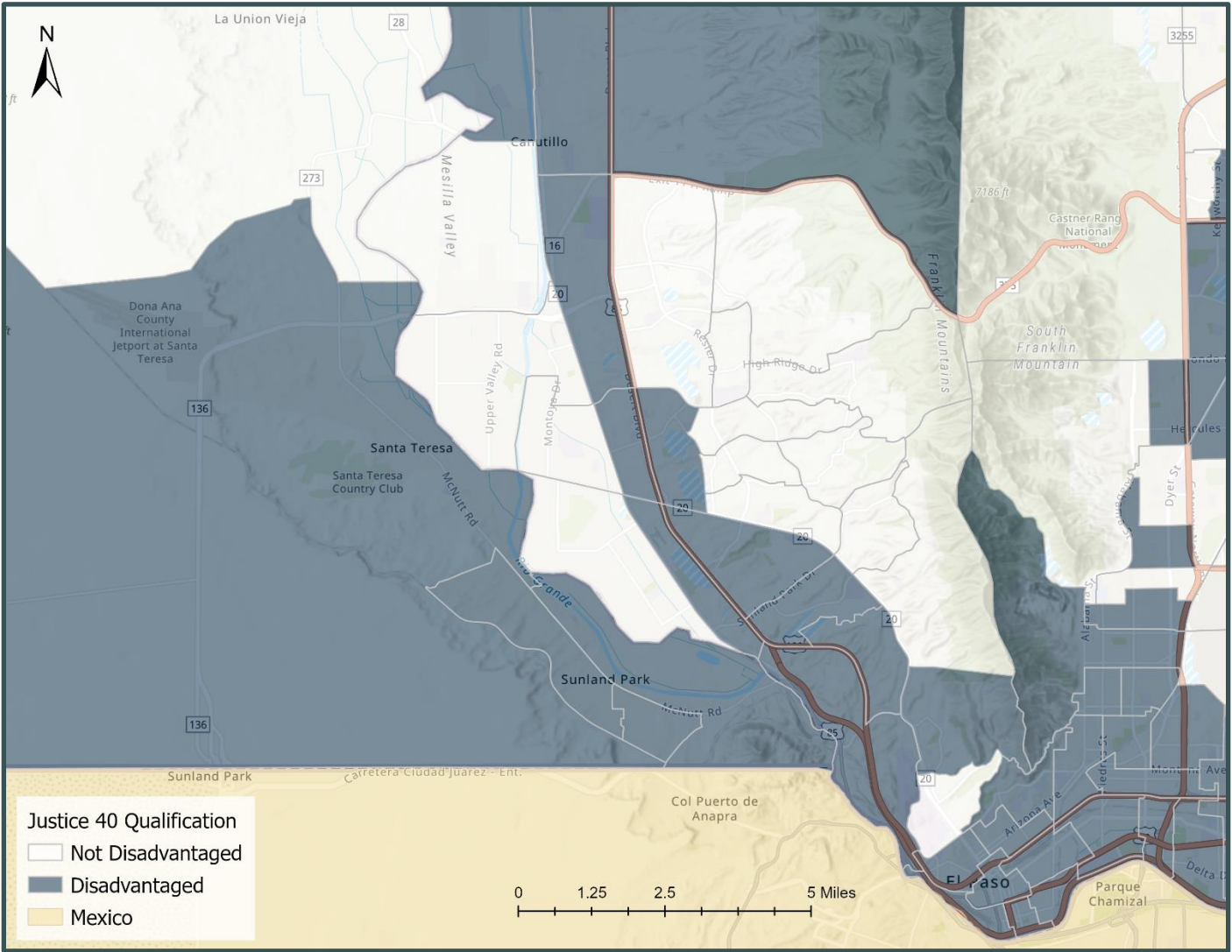
Source: US Decennial Census 2020, US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016-2019)

Doña Ana County, Santa Teresa, and Sunland Park have similar population characteristics. The populations in these areas are younger than the statewide median age. The median age is 33.3 years in Doña Ana County, 33 years in Santa Teresa, and 31.3 years in Sunland Park, compared to 38.1 in New Mexico. The largest minority group near the study area is Hispanic/Latino representing 68 percent of Doña Ana County’s population, 63 percent of Santa Teresa’s population, and 89 percent of Sunland Park’s population. Based on minority representation, Santa Teresa and Sunland Park are both communities of concern for environmental justice.

Santa Teresa and Sunland Park are both small border communities located near the New Mexico-Texas border and close to the international border with Mexico. Santa Teresa and Sunland Park have multicultural, historical, and somewhat complicated economic and environmental issues that affect border communities. Community services in both of these communities are provided by Doña Ana County, La Clinica de Familia, Gadsden Independent School District, and Doña Ana Community College— Gadsden Center. Additional community services are found in nearby cities such as El Paso, TX, Las Cruces, NM, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. While NM 213 is part of an important border transportation route, it lacks a variety of local businesses.

The EJ Screening Tool and the Justice40 Climate and Economics Justice Screening Tool were used to identify areas that have been classified as disadvantaged pertaining to issues of health conditions, infrastructure, socioeconomics, and other factors. (see Figure 3)

Figure 3: Disadvantaged Census Tracts



Within the study area there is one census tract and that tract is identified as disadvantaged by the EPA and Justice40 initiative. Census tracts are marked as disadvantaged if it is located in a census tract that is (1) at or above the threshold for one or more environmental, climate, or other burdens, and (2) at or above the threshold for an associated socioeconomic burden (Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool). The census tract and associated burdens are as follows:

Census Tracts	Associated Burdens
Census Tract: 35013001701	
	o Legacy Pollution
	o Workforce Development

Also integral to the implementation of the PIP, are the locations and percentages of limited English speaking and low-income populations. Within the study area, 90% to 95% of people are limited English speaking, and a small section within the study area contains 50% to 60% of people who are limited English speaking. This information will help inform the efforts around the outreach activities and messaging. (see Figure 4 and Figure 5)

Figure 4: Limited English-Speaking Population

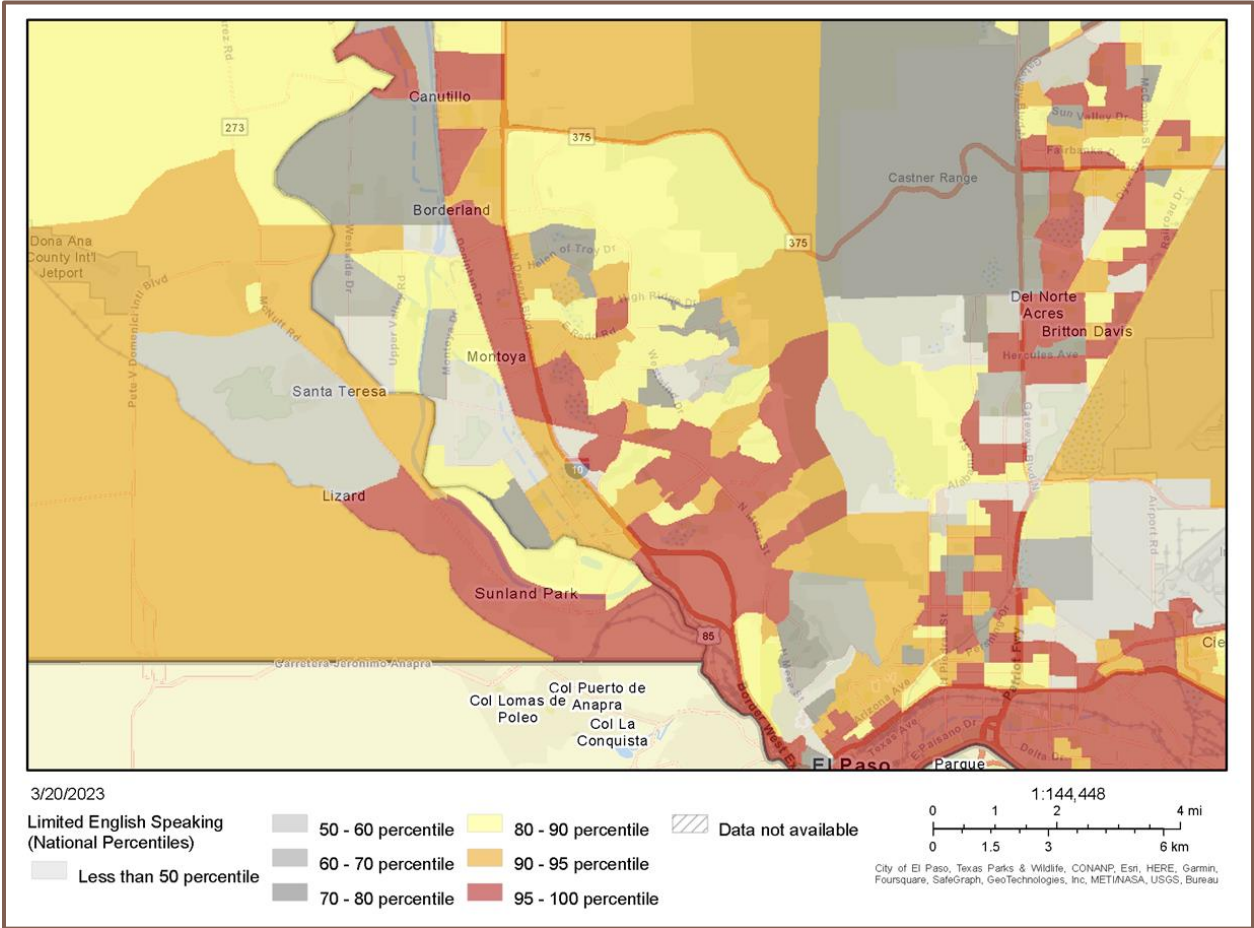
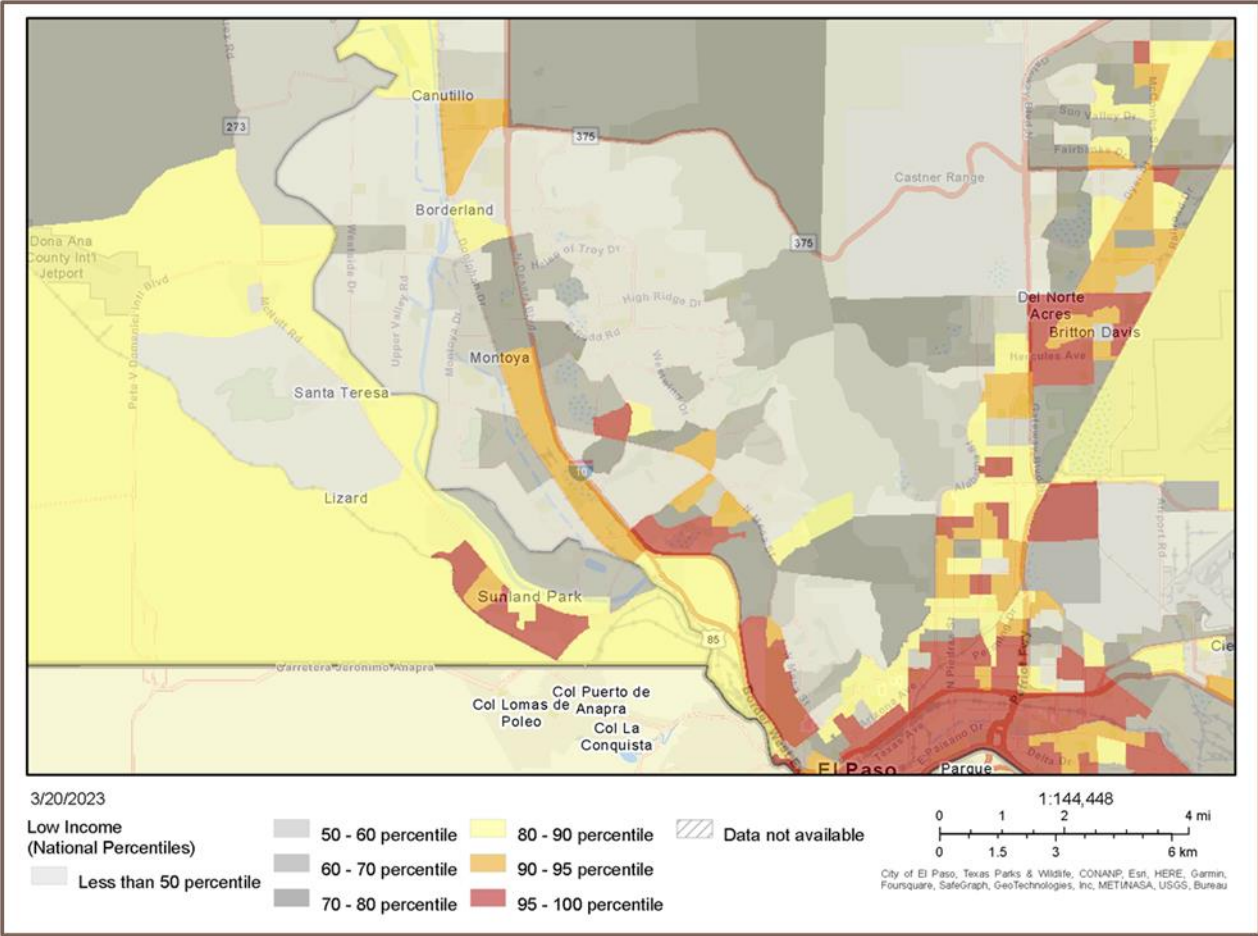


Figure 5: Low-Income Populations



6. Transportation

The existing transportation network includes the primary roadways: NM 136, NM 273, CR A003 (NM 9), and Artcraft Rd. The NM 136 Interchange Feasibility Study is proposed to provide improved intersections/interchanges with connecting roadways within the region. In the early 1990's when NM 136 was being established, the access management was created to allow at-grade signalized intersections spaced approximately 1 mile to 1.5 miles apart which would allow reasonable access to the adjacent developing properties but still allow the efficient movement of traffic on NM 136 mainline. The improved connectivity would benefit the residents of the area as well as regional travel.

The functional classifications for the state roadways in the study area are listed below:

- NM 136 (McNutt Rd) – Principal arterial
- NM 273 (Sunland Park Dr) – Minor arterial
- Artcraft Rd (SH 178) – Principal arterial
- NM 9 (CR A003) – Major Collector

7. Visual

The visual landscape in the study area is largely rural lands, with low-density development, and vacant lots. The terrain has a typical Chihuahuan desert scrub with a natural landscape that is common in southern New Mexico. The NM 136 corridor has a distinctly rural visual character with scenic views in some portions. The proposed interchanges will add a new visual feature for the traveling public, and it is expected that aesthetic considerations will be necessary. Input from stakeholders and the study team will be valuable to guide the development of potential alternatives in terms of visual resources. Proposed future development adjacent to the highway corridor will also be taken into consideration. Input on specific aesthetic enhancements to the proposed alternatives will be requested during outreach element included in Phases A and B of the study.

8. Public Health and Safety

Air quality and noise impacts are the main public health issues related to roadways. As interchange feasibility locations and types are considered, the potential impacts to noise and air quality will be considered.

Currently, there is little to no bicycle or active transportation along the NM 136 corridor; however, opportunities to integrate bicycle and pedestrian facilities along with the provisions for regional and local transit services will be considered where appropriate.

It is expected that safety conditions will be enhanced as a result of any future interchanges. The purpose and need of the proposed interchanges are expected to include improved emergency services based on more effective access to NM 136 allowing for more efficient response times and alternative routes, as needed.

IV. TRAVEL MODES AND CONNECTIONS

1. Motorized Vehicles

The study area (see Figure 1) is served by the following highway facilities – NM 136, NM 273, Artcraft Rd, and I-10. These major corridors provide mobility for the region and are the major traffic carriers for the transportation network. Motorized vehicles, both passenger and commercial, are the primary mode of travel in the region.

2. Transit

There are a few transit services within the study area but none that travel along the project corridor specifically. The South Central Regional Transit District provides bus service between Santa Teresa and Sunland Park. El Paso Mass Transportation Department (SunMetro) provides transit service in west El Paso, with 2 routes along Artcraft Road outside the project corridor.

3. Pedestrian

A multi-use path exists where NM 136 transitions to Artcraft Road. This connection of this path will be considered in any of the proposed design layouts for an interchange at this location. The Study will determine if other pedestrian facilities are needed, or can be integrated, along the corridor.

4. Bicycle

Currently, there is little to none bicycle traffic along this corridor; however, opportunities to provide bicycle facilities will be considered during design, if appropriate.

V. Opportunities to Express Local Values

Local values held by the public and key stakeholders are an important component of the PIP. Opportunities to express these values include considerations such as: design speed, traffic calming, gateway treatments, and structural aesthetics. For the proposed interchanges along NM 136, considerations will include design speed, interchange layouts and geometrics, and structural aesthetics of bridges.

VI. Scaling the Solution to the Problem

The feasibility of adding interchanges along NM 136 will be evaluated. Because this is a Phase 1A/B study, the level of alternatives development along with the evaluation will be qualitative and quantitative. Opportunity for the public to comment on the alternatives development and evaluation process will occur during public meetings and via online applications throughout the decision-making process. The Study Team will perform an initial evaluation for bridge configurations and types associated with proposed interchanges and will develop conceptual typical sections for a frontage road system on both sides of NM 136. Opportunity for the public to comment on the development and evaluation process will be made transparent and easily accessible.

VII. Public Involvement Approach

1. Study-Specific Communication Strategy

The NMDOT Location Study Procedures, Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS), and public involvement will be fully integrated with the intention of designing a study that best responds to the needs of the local community and the traveling public.

The framework for the overall communication strategy will be developed in coordination with the NMDOT. In anticipation of federal participation during design and construction phases, BHI will be responsible for developing and implementing the communication strategy and ensuring that public involvement requirements meet FHWA and NMDOT requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and maintaining an administrative record of the public involvement process.

Primary responsibilities are as follows:

- NMDOT will approve the format and content of all public involvement events.
- NMDOT and BHI representatives will be available to make presentations at meetings as needed.
- BHI will provide Spanish interpretation at public events.
- BHI will prepare slideshow presentations and display boards.
- BHI will coordinate, schedule, and set up all public and stakeholder events.
- BHI will prepare public meeting notices, handouts, comment forms, sign-in sheets, and public meeting summaries.
- BHI will arrange for newspaper publication of meeting notices.
- BHI will maintain the NEPA administrative record including public involvement documentation.
- BHI will develop visuals for the NMDOT website study page.
- BHI will develop an interactive map to be linked to the NMDOT website page.
- BHI can translate the agency and public outreach elements into electronic versions and provide opportunities for virtual meetings and input collection, as needed.
- BHI will translate outreach materials into Spanish, as appropriate.

A. ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

A stakeholder list will be assembled and confirmed with NMDOT. Stakeholders are expected to include adjacent property owners, business representatives, utility and rail service representatives, emergency services and/or border patrol, area residents, elected officials, and agency officials.

Two stakeholder meetings will be held in the region with an opportunity to join via a virtual platform. One of the meetings will be held at the beginning of the NM 136 Interchange Feasibility Study during the existing conditions analysis and development of the initial alternatives to ensure all options are considered, and the second one will be held during the detailed evaluation of alternatives to share proposed alternatives with the stakeholders and capture their feedback before finalizing and sharing with the public. Plus, two coordination meetings will be arranged specifically with TxDOT representatives. These may be in-person with a virtual option or virtual, depending on the availability of invitees.

The above-referenced stakeholder meetings, in addition to the public meetings, will be the principal approaches used to engage stakeholders. The stakeholder list will be fluid and updated throughout the study development process. Given the previous experience within the study area, BHI has a solid framework for a stakeholder contact list to initiate the task.

B. WEBSITE MATERIALS

A collection of materials used for the public outreach will be developed with consistent colors, font, and styles, including a study specific logo. This includes slideshow presentations that can be used at public involvement events, a comment form to obtain stakeholder comments for decision-making and the administrative record, display boards, and other supportive visuals. All visuals and materials will be made available to the NMDOT for review before finalizing, and then available for uploading to the NMDOT website study page. Information will be updated regularly to ensure that current information is provided to the public.

C. PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER MEETING NOTICES

For public involvement meetings, notices will be developed in both English and Spanish. They will be distributed to the stakeholder list and the public at least 15 days in advance of public meetings and will have the following format and content:

- Identification (logos) for the study and FHWA and NMDOT as the sponsoring agencies
- Purpose of the meeting in relation to the overall study
- Meeting date, location, and time
- Map showing the study area and meeting location (if possible).
- Contact number for further information and ADA accommodations.

Public involvement meeting notices and information will be provided to the public, primarily by email, social media, study website, newspaper ads, and the posting of paper flyers. As required by federal regulations, traditional forms of notification (published notices) will continue to be used to inform the public of study meetings and events. Newspaper display advertisements will be placed in the Las Cruces Sun News and the El Paso Times in English, 15 days prior to the public involvement meetings. Public involvement events will be coordinated with the NMDOT District 1 public information officer, and a press release will be issued as appropriate. Notices will be displayed at the NMDOT District 1 office and posted on the NMDOT website study page.

Additional opportunities to advertise to Spanish-speaking communities will be researched including local Spanish newspapers, social media, and posting of physical flyers.

D. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEETINGS

Two public involvement meetings are proposed during the NM 136 Interchange Feasibility Study. The meetings are anticipated to be in-person and will be held in the Santa Teresa/Sunland Park area (location to be determined). The initial public meeting will be held near the beginning of Phase A/B to introduce the study and solicit input for the study, and a second public involvement meeting will be held near the end of Phase A/B to present the alternatives considered and to gather feedback on the recommendations developed by the study team. Public and stakeholder input received will help with identification of the preferred alternative and completion of the Phase A/B study. For both in-person public involvement meetings, a presentation with recorded video will be prepared in both English and Spanish and hosted on

the study website after the public meeting to allow for online viewing and comment. The location, format, and presentation responsibilities for each meeting will be determined prior to the meeting and approved by the NMDOT study development engineer, NMDOT Environmental Liaison, NMDOT NEPA Public Engagement Officer, NMDOT District 1 Public Information Officer, and NMDOT District 1 engineer support manager.

As part of the public involvement process BHI will prepare two renderings of the proposed interchange. The initial visual rendering will provide an example of the potential improvements to the public. As the study refines an enhanced visual rendering will be developed and presented at the second public meeting.

A public involvement summary will be prepared to document attendance as well as questions and comments made at the meetings and submitted by other means within two weeks after the comment period has ended.

E. STUDY TEAM MEETINGS

Study team meetings will occur during this study phase. Representatives from the NMDOT and Bohannon Huston will participate in all study team meetings. These meetings will cover study management, study process, alternative development, recommended evaluation, and selection, environmental, right-of-way, drainage, utilities, schedule, study milestones, and public involvement.

F. AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

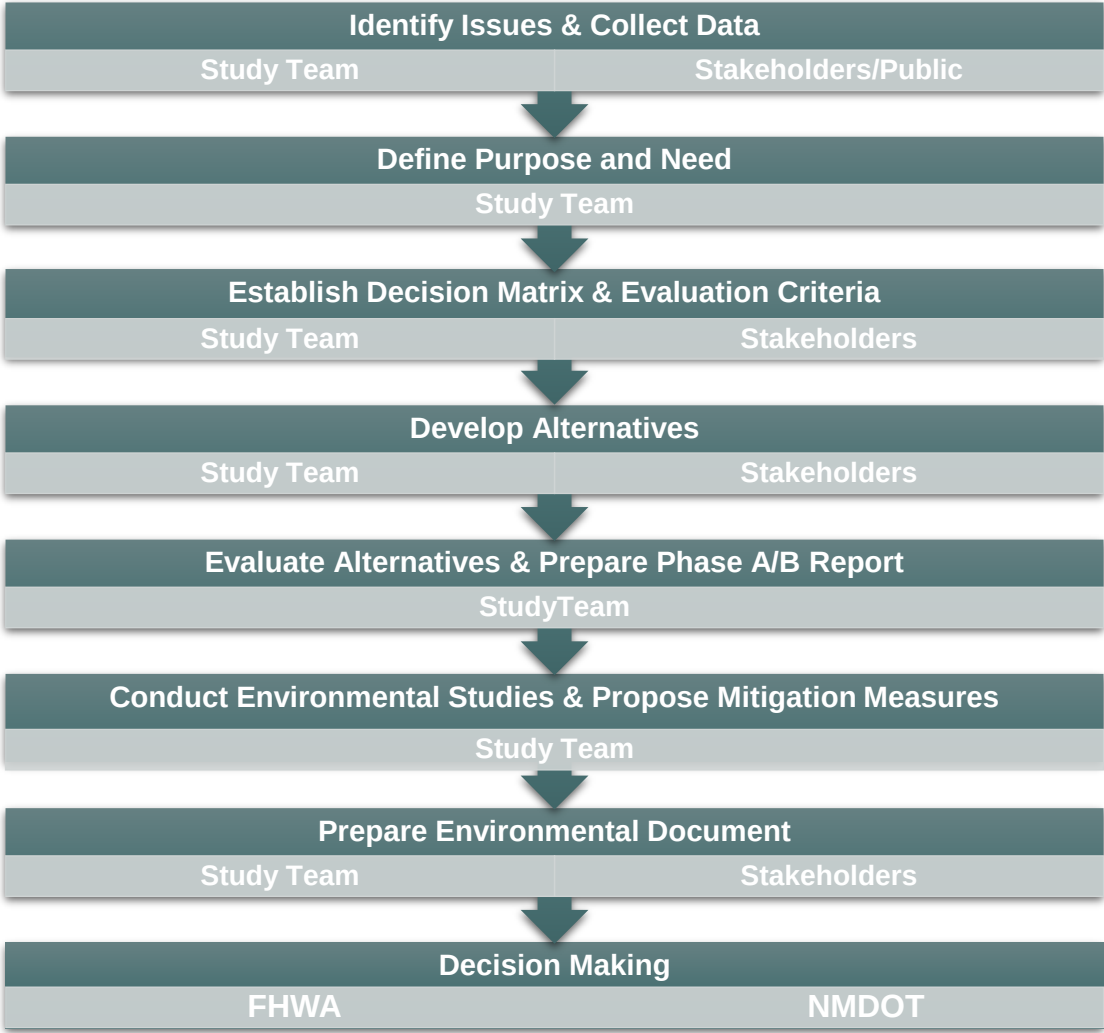
The Phase A/B report for the NM 136 Interchange Feasibility Study will be available for viewing on the NMDOT website study page, along with other relevant documents.

2. Multi-Disciplinary Study Team

The study team is comprised of a multi-disciplinary team to execute all elements of the scope of work. The study team includes expertise in the following disciplines: study development, roadway design, environmental, right-of-way, traffic analysis, safety, public involvement and outreach, drainage analysis and design, pavement design, utilities, geotechnical investigations, land use and socioeconomics, cultural resources, and visual design. Input from these different disciplines will be integrated throughout all phases of the study and include issue identification, alternative development and evaluation, environmental analysis, and study design processes.

In addition to the study team, stakeholders will be engaged in the evaluation of potential alternatives and decision-making process.

3. Decision-Making Process



4. Identification of Stakeholders and The Public

In terms of stakeholder identification, stakeholders are divided into the following three categories:

- 1. Stakeholders directly impacted by the study because their property is located adjacent to NM 136, they travel frequently through the area, or have a vested interest in study decisions.
- 2. Stakeholders indirectly impacted by the study because they use NM 136 as part of their travel routes or because of their special interest in the study.
- 3. Agencies with jurisdictional authority over the infrastructure or land use along NM 136.

The three stakeholder groups are identified below:

- 1) Directly Impacted Stakeholders

- a) Those with properties located along or adjacent to the NM 136
 - i) Property owners or renters on adjoining properties
 - ii) Business owners or managers on adjacent properties
 - iii) Owners of vacant properties
 - iv) Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)
 - v) New Mexico State Land Office
- b) Those who frequently travel along NM 136
 - i) Residents in Sunland Park and Santa Teresa
 - ii) Customers of businesses within the study area
 - iii) Commuters (local, metro, regional)
 - iv) Regional or long-distance travelers in the region
- c) Those who rely on regional transportation network as part of their operation
 - i) Goods transporters including truck drivers
 - ii) Regional law enforcement and emergency service providers
 - iii) Doña Ana County sheriff, fire, and emergency service providers
 - iv) Utility and service providers
- 2) Indirectly Impacted Stakeholders
 - a) Local business associations
 - b) Local citizen groups
 - c) General public
 - d) Elected officials.
- 3) Government Agencies and Municipalities
 - a) Doña Ana Community College
 - b) Doña Ana County
 - c) Doña Ana County sheriff, fire, and emergency service providers
 - d) Doña Ana County International Jetport
 - e) Gadsden Independent School District
 - f) Sunland Park, NM
 - g) El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
 - h) El Paso, TX
 - i) Ciudad Juárez, Mexico
 - j) New Mexico Border Authority
 - k) New Mexico State Police
 - l) New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division
 - n) Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
 - o) US Army Corps of Engineers
 - p) US Customs and Border Protection US Federal Highway Administration
 - q) Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

5. Identification of Issues

Public involvement and stakeholder coordination will help identify issues as the study process is implemented. However, initially the following issues are expected to be important to stakeholders:

- Location of the interchanges?
- Bridge type for the interchanges?
- Will the study need to acquire right-of-way?
- Will there be sidewalks, bicycle lanes, or trails?
- How will the visual appearance be improved?
- Will there be landscaping?
- How will construction affect regional travel?
- How will construction affect the movement of truck traffic?

6. Consensus on Purpose and Need Definition

The following elements of a purpose and need statement are proposed:

- Provide improved facilities under emergency conditions
- Address safety concerns that arise during the study
- Provide infrastructure for anticipated development in local and regional plans
- Address potential congestion issues due to future development

The purpose statement addresses traffic demand, traffic safety, system connectivity, and economic development needs. The study will also address regional transportation needs and consider adjacent area plans. A consensus will be obtained through discussions at study team and public involvement meetings. The study will consider how to address elements of the purpose and need.

7. Consensus on Evaluation Criteria

A. NMDOT LOCATION STUDY PROCEDURES AND NEPA

NMDOT implements the preliminary study design according to the Location Study Procedures Guidebook (NMDOT, 2015). Public involvement occurs throughout the study phase. The study will provide supporting documentation for compliance with NEPA. The NM 136 Interchange Feasibility Study Phase A/B report will summarize all of the technical analysis for the study and provide findings, results, conclusions, and recommendations. During Phase C, a categorical exclusion is expected to be prepared.

B. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Stakeholders will provide input into the development of evaluation criteria and the evaluation of alternatives. It is expected that criteria will be mixture of technical factors developed by the study team. The criteria and a scoring system would incorporate issues identified by stakeholders. The study team will finalize the evaluation criteria.

8. Tracking Commitments

All decisions and commitments made during the study phase and into study development will be documented so that they can be addressed in future phases. Suggested mitigation measures would also be included. It will be the responsibility of the NMDOT study development engineer to ensure that the decisions and commitments made are implemented.

Mitigation measures to reduce potential negative impacts may need to be revised in future phases. Such revisions will be reviewed and approved by NMDOT decision-makers. Mitigation strategies will be included in the environmental documentation and ultimately be implemented in the construction plans.

VIII. REFERENCES

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