



# Public Involvement Summary

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project  
CN 5102000

Meeting Date: May 7, 2026

Prepared by:

HDR Engineering, Inc.  
2155 Louisiana Blvd NE  
Suite 3000  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

In cooperation with:

New Mexico Department of Transportation



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## Introduction

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is committed to increasing safety at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge in Taos County. This project aims to enhance safety while preserving the bridge's historic character and structural integrity, ensuring it remains a lasting symbol of connection and safe travel.

In Spring 2026, public involvement began for a new phase of the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project. Community input was collected from May 7 to June 1, 2026.

## Open House

An open house was held on Thursday, May 7, 2026, at Sagebrush Inn & Suites to share an update on the project and solicit community feedback. A total of **47 people** attended the open house.

## Notifications

Notifications produced for the open house advertised the event and directed people to the website for more information. All notifications can be found in *Appendix A: Notifications*.

### Digital Ad

A digital ad promoting the meeting was displayed on [www.santafenewmexican.com](http://www.santafenewmexican.com) from April 23 to May 6, 2026. The ad received 193,973 impressions and 57 clicks.

### Newspaper Ad

A print ad promoting the meeting was placed in Taos News. The ¼ page ad was published in the April 30, 2026, edition of the newspaper.

### Poster

A poster advertising the meeting was created and sent to eleven agencies and stakeholders in the project area, with a request to hang it up or share it with interested parties. 55 copies of this poster were printed and mailed to the following agencies/organizations:

- NMDOT District 5
- Town of Taos
- Taos Fire Department
- Taos Police Department
- Taos County
- Taos County Sheriff's Office
- Taos County Fire & EMS
- Taos Behavioral Health
- True Kids 1
- Health Care Authority
- Taos Public Health Office

## Social Media

A social media plan was developed and shared on the New Mexico Department of Transportation's Facebook and Instagram accounts from April 30 to May 6, 2026. The statistics for each post are listed below.

- April 30, 2026 – Facebook
  - 34 reactions
  - 8 comments
  - 21 shares
- May 6, 2026 – Facebook
  - 83 reactions
  - 54 comments
  - 39 shares
- April 30, 2026 – Instagram
  - 7 reactions
  - 1 comment
- May 6, 2026 – Instagram
  - 4 reactions
  - 0 comments

## Stakeholder Email

An email advertising the meeting was sent to 41 stakeholders around the project area. The stakeholders are affiliated with the organizations and agencies listed below.

- NMDOT
- Town of Taos
- Taos Town Council
- Taos Fire Department
- Taos Police Department
- Taos County
- Taos County Sheriff's Office
- Taos County Fire & EMS
- Taos Behavioral Health
- Help Outreach Taos
- True Kids 1
- Health Care Authority
- Department of Health

## Materials

Several materials were available for public viewing at the open house. All open house materials can be found in *Appendix B: Materials*.

## Presentation

A live presentation was delivered during the open house. The presentation covered the following topics:

- Project Purpose
- Overview
- History
- Facts & Figures
- A Call for Action
- Ongoing Safety Improvements
- Technical Milestones
- Option One: Horizontal Netting
- Option Two: Raising the Vertical Railing
- Option Three: No Build
- Next Steps

## Display Boards

Display boards were created and available for public viewing at the open house. The display boards covered the following topics:

- Project Area
- Project Purpose
- Ongoing Safety Improvements

## Public Comments

A total of 49 comments and questions were received between May 7 and June 1, 2026, through the following methods:

- 15 verbal questions/comments were received at the May 7 open house
- Six (6) written comments were received at the May 7 open house
- Seven (7) comments were submitted by email
- 20 comments were submitted on the project website
- One (1) written comment was received via USPS mail

## Comment Themes

The most common theme in these comments was opposition to closing the bridge for construction, with 18 comments mentioning this sentiment. The most common reason for this opposition was concerns about how bridge closure would affect nearby communities (16 comments). Other reasons given were safety concerns about detours (11 comments), traffic concerns (three comments), and financial concerns (one comment). Six comments suggested closing one lane of the bridge at a time for construction, while three mentioned nighttime bridge closures only.

Four comments supported closing the bridge for construction.

Eight comments called for immediate action to make the bridge safer.

When it comes to raising the rails, five comments support this specific effort, while four oppose it. Six comments mentioned supporting some type of bridge deterrent.

Five comments focused on how physical safety deterrents would affect the bridge's aesthetics.

Three comments focused on more mental health resources.

All comments can be found in *Appendix C: Public Comments*.

# Appendices

**Appendix A: Notifications**

**Appendix B: Materials**

**Appendix C: Public Comments**

## Appendix A: Notifications

### Digital Ad



# RAISE THE RAILS

*Protecting locals, travelers, and visitors*

The NMDOT's continued commitment to enhancing safety, strengthening structural integrity and preserving the enduring beauty of the iconic Rio Grande Gorge Bridge.

**Join us at an open house to learn more.**

**OPEN HOUSE**  
Thursday, May 7th  
5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Sagebrush Inn & Suites  
Chamisa Room  
1508 Paseo Del Pueblo Sur  
Taos, NM 87571

For more information, visit [bit.ly/Raisetherails](https://bit.ly/Raisetherails)

**CN 5102000**



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## Newspaper Ad

# RAISE THE RAILS

## RIO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE PROJECT

CN 5102000



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The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is raising the rails at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge located on US 64 in Taos County. The project aims to make the bridge safer by strengthening the barrier and raising the railing height while preserving the bridge's historic character and structural integrity. The project team will share a presentation with the latest project updates at an upcoming open house. View or request more information through the following methods:

**Online:** [bit.ly/Raisetherails](https://bit.ly/Raisetherails)

**Email:** [laura.rios@hdrinc.com](mailto:laura.rios@hdrinc.com)

**Mail:** Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project  
c/o HDR, Inc.  
2155 Louisiana Blvd NE  
Ste 3000  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

**Please submit your comments by May 21, 2026.**

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For Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Civil Rights Title VI accommodations and/or more information call Laura Rios at 480-619-3564 or by email at [laura.rios@hdrinc.com](mailto:laura.rios@hdrinc.com). Por favor comuníquese al 480-619-3564 si desea esta información en Español.

Poster

# RAISE THE RAILS

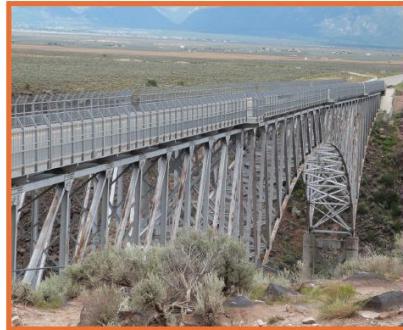
## RIO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE PROJECT

CN 5102000



### Join us for an Open House

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is raising the rails at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge located on US 64 in Taos County. The project aims to enhance safety while preserving the bridge's historic character and structural integrity, ensuring it remains a lasting symbol of connection and safe travel. Join us for an open house on May 7, 2026, to learn more about the project.



*Photo rendering of future bridge looking east.*



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5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Sagebrush Inn & Suites  
Chamisa Room  
1508 Paseo Del Pueblo Sur  
Taos, NM 87571



*Photo rendering of future bridge from the sidewalk on the south side.*

### Find Out More & Share Your Thoughts

If you can't attend the Open House, you can still view the presentation and ask questions through the following ways:

- **Online:** [bit.ly/Raisetherails](https://bit.ly/Raisetherails)
- **By email:** [laura.rios@hdrinc.com](mailto:laura.rios@hdrinc.com)
- **By USPS Mail:**  
Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project  
c/o HDR, Inc.  
2155 Louisiana Blvd. NE, Suite 3000  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

**Please submit your comments by May 21, 2026.**


Scan to learn more and share your thoughts



*Photo rendering of future bridge from the sidewalk on the north side.*

For assistance, language translation, or ADA accommodations, please contact Laura Rios at [laura.rios@hdrinc.com](mailto:laura.rios@hdrinc.com) or 480-619-3564. Por favor comuníquese al 480-619-3564 si desea esta información en Español.

## Social Media

 **NMDOT**  
April 30 · 🌐


NMDOT is raising the rails at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, reflecting a strong commitment to public safety and community well-being.




Want to learn more? Join us at our upcoming open house.


Thursday, May 7, 2026  
5:30 – 7:00 p.m.  
Sagebrush Inn & Suites  
Chamisa Room  
1508 Paseo Del Pueblo Sur  
Taos, NM 87571

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/Raisetherails>

#NMDOTcares #RaisetheRails #RioGrandeGorgeBridge #TaosBridge See less






# RAISE THE RAILS





## RIO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE PROJECT

Join us at an open house to learn more.

<p><b>OPEN HOUSE</b> Thursday, May 7th 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Sagebrush Inn &amp; Suites Chamisa Room 1508 Paseo Del Pueblo Sur Taos, NM 87571</p>
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**CN 5102000**

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# RAISE THE RAILS

## RIO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE PROJECT

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**CN 5102000**

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newmexicodot NMDOT is raising the rails at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, reflecting a strong commitment to public safety and community well-being.

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#NMDOTcares #RaisetheRails #RioGrandeGorgeBridge  
#TaosBridge

4w

Hidden by Instagram

01100001\_01110110\_01110111 Its not a safety issue its a mental illness issue due to high taxes, low wages, and no healthcare

4w Reply



7 likes  
April 30

Add a comment...

Post

 **NMDOT**  
May 6 at 11:00 AM · 🌐

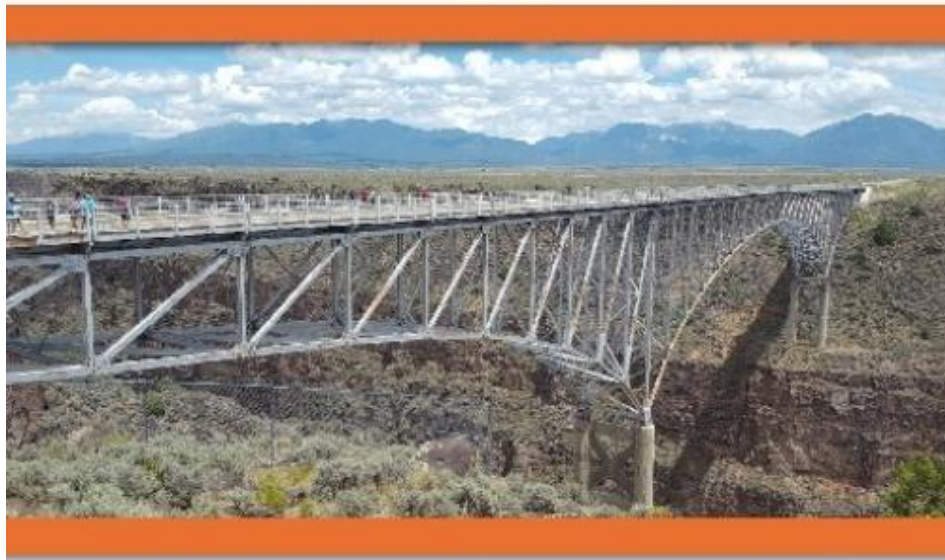
TOMORROW, Thursday, May 7 at 5:30 p.m., join the New Mexico Department of Transportation for an open house on the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project.

Stop by, meet the project team, and learn more about the plan to raise the rails.

Thursday, May 7, 2026

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Sagebrush Inn & Suites



# RAISE THE RAILS

Join us for an open house to learn more about the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project

**OPEN HOUSE**  
Thursday, May 7th  
5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

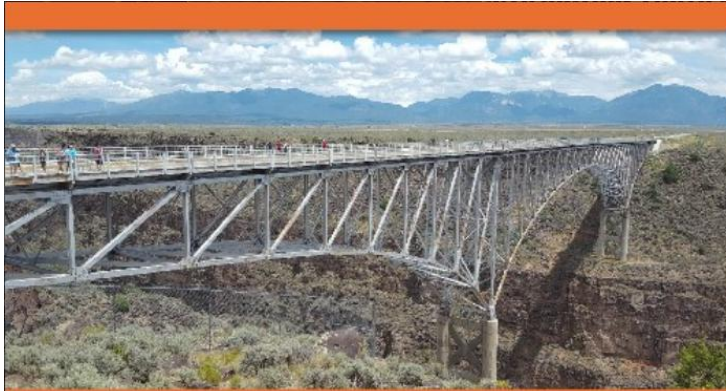
Sagebrush Inn & Suites  
Chamisa Room  
1508 Paseo Del Pueblo Sur  
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**CN 5102000**

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# RAISE THE RAILS

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**CN 5102000**

 newmexicodot • Follow

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#NMDOTcares #RaisetheRails #RioGrandeGorgeBridge  
#TaosBridge

3w



4 likes  
May 6

 Add a comment...

Post

## Stakeholder Email

### JOIN US FOR AN OPEN HOUSE

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is raising the rails at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge located on U.S. Highway 64, about eight miles west of the junction with N.M. Highway 522 in Taos County. The project aims to replace the railing and enhance safety, while preserving the bridge's structural integrity, ensuring it remains a lasting symbol of connection and safe travel. Join us for an Open House on May 7, 2026, to learn more about the project and ask questions.

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Room  
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Taos, NM 87571

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### PROJECT BACKGROUND

Because the bridge has been the site of tragic loss over the years, NMDOT conducted two structural feasibility studies to evaluate potential improvements. These studies considered several factors, including inspection access, structural feasibility, cost, community values, cultural resources, historic resources, visual impacts, constructability, and maintenance. The most feasible option was to replace the existing rail with a higher steel railing system.



*Photo rendering of selected alternative looking towards the bridge.*



*Photo rendering of selected alternative looking from the bridge.*



*Photo rendering of selected alternative looking from the bridge.*



*Photo rendering of selected alternative looking from the bridge.*

## SHARE YOUR INPUT

If you can't attend the Open House, you can still share your thoughts in the following ways:

- Online: <https://bit.ly/Raisetherails>
- By email: [laura.rios@hdrinc.com](mailto:laura.rios@hdrinc.com)
- By USPS Mail: Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project c/o HDR, Inc. 2155 Louisiana Blvd. NE, Suite 3000, Albuquerque, NM 87110

Please submit your comments by May 21, 2026.

## Appendix B: Materials

### Presentation



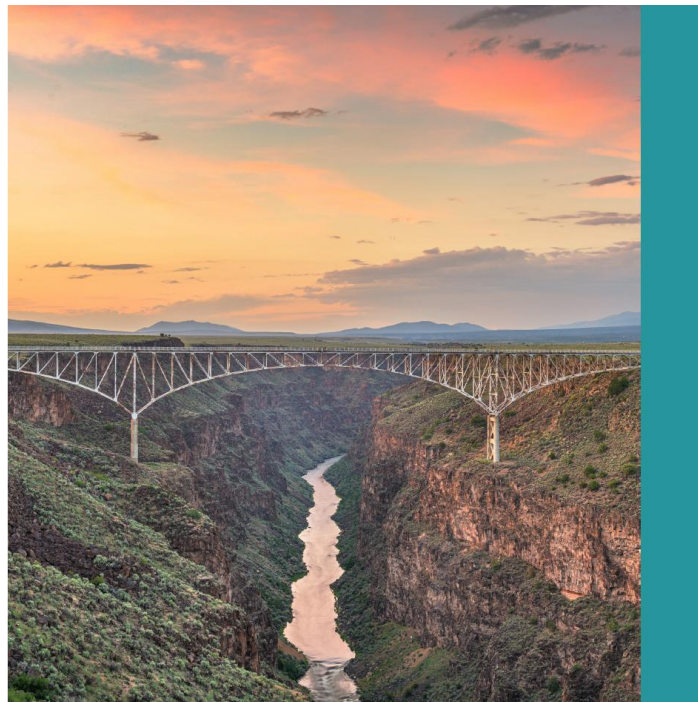
Open House  
Thursday, May 7, 2026

Control Number: 5102000



## Project Purpose

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is committed to increasing safety at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge in Taos County. The project aims to enhance safety while preserving the bridge's historic character and structural integrity, ensuring it remains a lasting symbol of connection and safe travel.

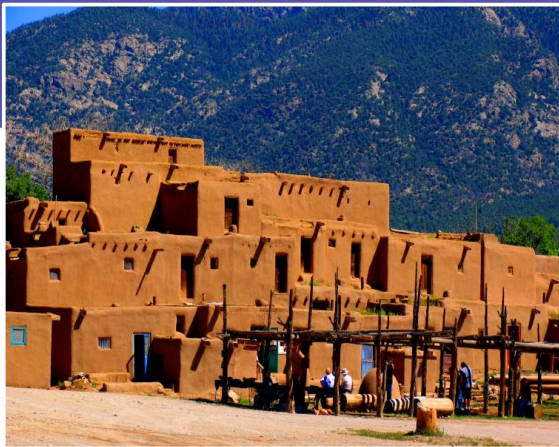


# Overview



- Located on U.S. 64, eight miles west of N.M. 522 junction

# Overview



- Owned and maintained by NMDOT
- Surrounding lands are managed by BLM and Taos Pueblo

## History

- Design must withstand heavy loads and high velocity winds.
- Completed in 1965
- Late 1990's bridge was listed on the State Register of Cultural Properties
- National Register of Historic Places



## Facts & Figures

- 7 th tallest bridge in the U-S
- 36-ft wide
- Two 4-ft sidewalks
- Two 14-ft driving lanes
- Three continuous steel truss spans



## A Call For Action

- Increasing pattern of suicides and suicide attempts
- Ongoing loss of life underscores need for safety interventions



7

## A Call For Action

- Enhance public safety
- Support people in crisis
- Raise awareness
- And meticulously study structural deterrents



8

## Ongoing Safety Improvements

- Pedestrian access closure
- Increased security staffing with 24-7 coverage and mental health training
- Enhance visible security measures
- Emergency call boxes
- Crisis lifeline signage
- Multi-agency coordination meetings



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## Ongoing Safety Improvements



- Temporary fence to raise height of the barrier.



10

## Technical Milestones 2009 & 2015

### Phase A Study

#### Designs for Structural Deterrents

- Structural integrity
- Visual resources
- Safety
- Historic character

#### Other Considerations

- Public input
- Engineering feasibility
- Constructability
- Maintenance requirements
- Inspection access
- Cost

## Technical Milestones 2018

### Phase B Study

#### Two Viable Options

- Horizontal Netting
- Raising the Vertical Railing

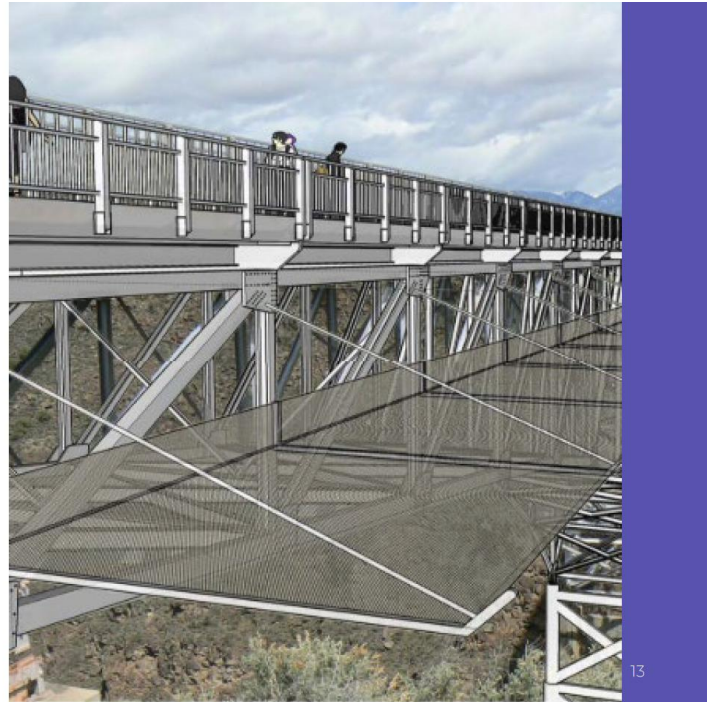
#### Study Results

- Public input and engineering analysis narrowed options further

## Option One

### Horizontal Netting

- Consisting of a stainless steel net
- Installed about 15 feet below the existing railing and extending about 15 feet from the edge of the bridge.



## Option Two

### Raising the Vertical Railing

- Removing the current railing and replacing it with a new, higher steel railing system
- The new design will feature steel members more than twice the height of the existing railing



## Next Steps

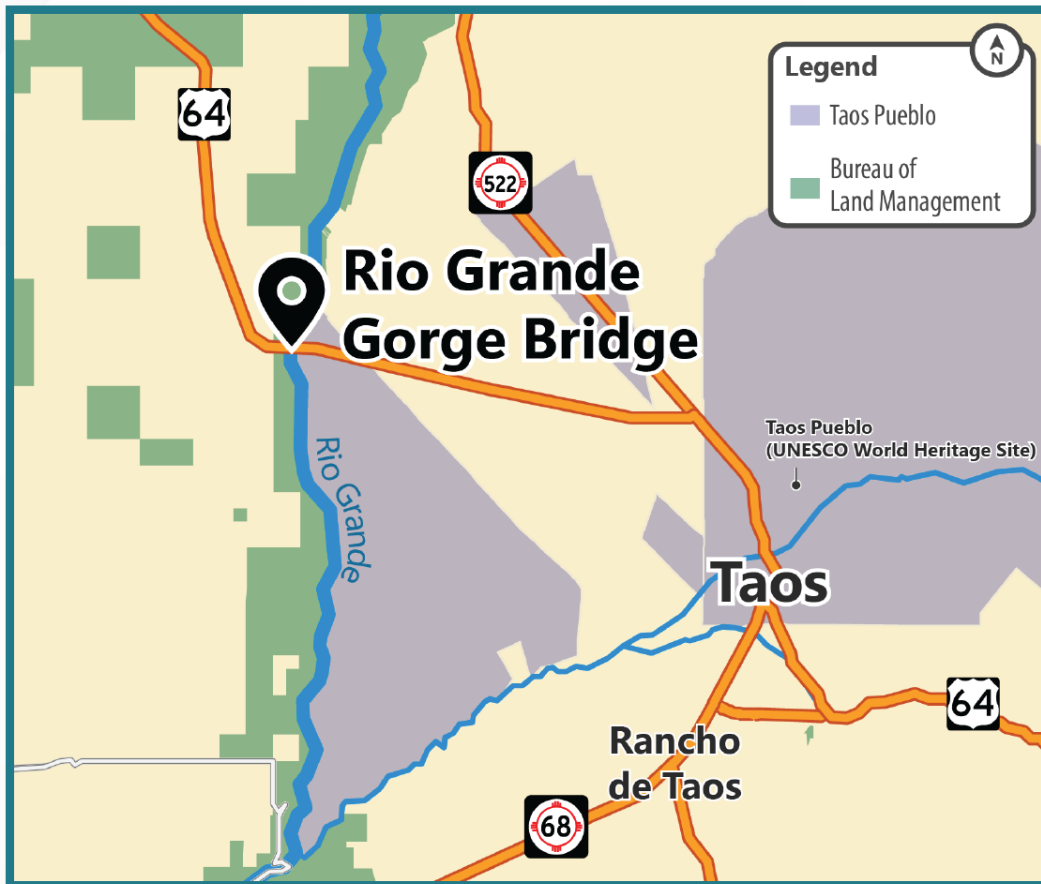
- Carefully assess viable options
- Gather more input
- Select a preferred alternative
- Obtain funding
- Construction



Thank you!

Display Boards

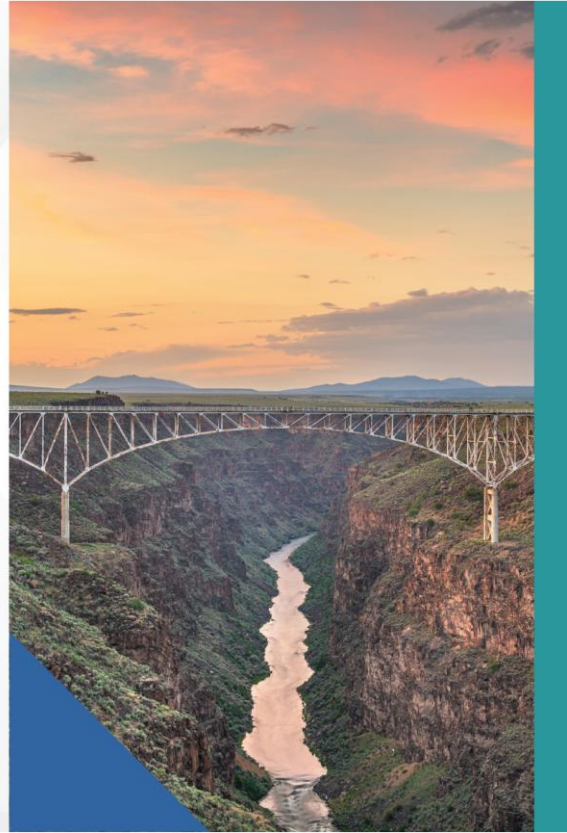
# Raise the Rails Project Area



## Project Purpose

NMDOT is raising the rails on the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge to strengthen safety and support community well-being.

The project enhances protection while preserving the bridge's historic character and structural integrity, ensuring it remains a lasting symbol of connection and safe travel.





## Appendix C: Public Comments

Date	Comment Type	Comment	Response
5/7	Open House	<p>I'm a structural engineer, and I'm an employee at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. And I'm also doing some consulting work for health outreach Taos. And so I'm familiar with the reports. I'm thankful that HDR's engineers are here at this meeting so that I can ask these questions directly. And I'm also very happy to see that the temporary deterrent is going to be going on. And I read through the reports, and the proposal for the permanent conceptual pictures look really good to me. So I'm happy to see those. I do have a couple of questions. The first one has to do with vehicle safety during inclement weather. In a scenario where the highway approaching the bridge is not slick, but there's a winter storm going on, and a car comes onto the bridge, which is slick, happens typically. Bridge surfaces are slicker than the typical traffic. If a car is going too fast, the driver panics or hits the brakes and goes out of control on the bridge. Currently, the sidewalks, the walkways are about a foot higher than the bridge deck. So they provide a barrier preventing the car from getting actually over as far as the railing, some significant barrier. Those concrete walkways are going to get removed. So my question is, will the new railing be sufficiently robust? Since it becomes a barrier now to a car leaving the bridge, will it be sufficiently robust to stop the car from going over the bridge?</p>	<p>So the concrete, we've actually done some evaluation of the concrete. The concrete that's actually there is lightweight concrete. We want to keep that intact. So 12-inch curbs would remain. The only repairs will be made to the concrete. We're trying to scope how much of the deck has got quick patchwork repair that has cracks. And that's less than probably 2.5%.</p>
5/7	Open House	<p>The report that was written in 2015 stated that the existing bridge ratings result in a load-carrying capacity was H17, which is less than the standard criteria of H20 that was in 2015. Is anything going to be done to bring the load-carrying standard of the bridge up</p>	<p>Sir, no. We're trying to maintain this standard that was in the bridge report. It would take significant strengthening of structural members underneath the bridge to increase the</p>

		to the current H20 highway requirement?	capacity. That's not really within the scope of the couple of the items that we're looking at. But as Secretary Quintana said to me, we're listening.
5/7	Open House	<p>Hi. I'm ----, and I'm a vendor at the Gorge Bridge. I've been vending there for over 25 years. This is my livelihood. This is how I make my money. And I represent our vendors. And we all work hard. We pay our taxes. We try to behave our best and keep each other in mind. But this would really mess up my money for my family, for my children, my grandchildren. I'm a member at Taos Pueblo, and we own half of that bridge. And I think we need to be supported because we're not out there trying to rob a bank or anything. We're just trying to make a living for our families. And I think it's really important that you think about us because even four weeks is a long time to be without money because my money is almost day-to-day because I have a small business. I make what I sell. But we have a lot of people out there that are from other states. And I want you guys to keep in mind, support us because we support Taos. I support the children's center at Taos Puzzle, the UNA, I'm their chairman on their board. And I try to give back to Taos. Another friend of mine, he's an artist. And every week, he and his wife go out here in Taos and try to give our homeless people food. And if he thinks they're doing good and they're not doing drugs or alcohol, he gives them money out of his pocket. And that's the money that comes out of my spend as well.</p>	

5/7	Open House	<p>I am -----, resident of Taos. I think there are two issues. So the one related to closing the bridge completely. I think there's so many people that live on the other side of the bridge that I can't imagine how much time would be added if the detour was implemented. So I guess maybe that's a question for you guys of what that detour would look like and how much time it would add, travel time from the Mesa to town. And then as far as the options for the safety barriers, in my mind, I think it's important, obviously, to have an effective barrier and also one that protects the aesthetic views of the bridge and to the bridge or from the bridge and to the bridge. So curious if you have any stats on whether or not one or the other is more effective and also maybe give us an order of magnitude idea of how much more it would cost for the net versus the vertical solution, which seems to me that the net is much more aesthetically appealing. So if you could address both the effectiveness of both of those as well as the cost difference.</p>	<p>Sure. To your first question, though, the detour, we're looking tentatively, obviously, at the Western Road down to Pilar. That's a pretty long detour. And I understand there's another detour potentially on the north side of Bongo that could be used as well. I'm not sure what the length of that detour is. But it's significant. I'm not going to lie. It's significant. Now, with regard to the effectiveness of either netting or fencing, we can find that out. I don't have it off the top of my head. And I don't know if, Danton, you have we'll get that information to you, the effectiveness of each one. To your point, yes, the netting probably is less impact-evidently view-shed-wise. I don't know that it's still, I think, an impact when you're looking at the bridge. That postcard view of the bridge is going to be changed no matter what, whether it's raising a rail or a netting system. But we're evaluating that. And we're going to find out exactly what the magnitude of cost difference is. It's pretty significant, but we'll let you know once we get that exact number, we'll get back with you on that. This isn't going to be the last time we come to the community. So next time that you come, we'll have that information with us as well. And we can share it with the if you want, please give us your contact information. Once we get it, we'll share it with everybody that's left their contact information with us.</p>
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			<p>Thank you for your question. Appreciate it.</p>
<p>5/7</p>	<p>Open House</p>	<p>My name is Richard, Taos resident. And I came here today to speak of the bridge. I know that that's not a popular thought that's held in this room. I've been verbally threatened. I've been threatened with physical abuse for saying that I think this is a wrong idea. Now, I've watched mothers with babies in their arms walk up to those rails, look out over that view, and nothing happened. The rail didn't throw them over. The baby didn't fall. Nothing happened to them. I know that looking at those views reduces stress in people. We know that. We have science to back it up. We know that a view of nature reduces cortisol levels, reduces stress, and actually lowers blood pressure. This is the first time anybody came to the community and asked us for our input. Informal polling shows a 3 to 1 against this rail here in the area. Now, you've never come to us before. You just said, "We're going to do it." Similar mandates that were made in the last five years, they didn't</p>	

		<p>work either. So we're being forced to do something and not even ask for our opinion. So I'm here to publicly say, "I think this is wrong." There's other methods we need to do. I like your idea about having staff out there and have them walking and looking. We need to connect with people on a human level. I don't think the bridge is at fault. I don't think raising the rail is going to solve the problem. Thank you.</p>	
5/7	Open House	<p>Hi my name is ----. I was founder of HOT, a suicide prevention program that started in 2016. I have been part of suicide prevention since 2008, back to Tri-County. I have several questions. First is, I've been out to the gorge. I hike the rift on a regular basis. There are so many other places that people can jump. Are we going to put up fencing there? That's a question because just putting up fencing isn't going to prevent us. I know three people personally that their lives were frequently saved by patrol out there, that people stopped them, called their dad. One mother that I work with was brought to the ER thanks to having people out there. That is the number one way to reduce suicides on the bridge. Number one. I've called on this community multiple times to have a walking patrol. It would take very little to do that. It would. And then the second question, if this is all about safety, Sheriff Miera, how long would it take you to respond to a heart attack, a drug overdose, or something NTP if the bridge were closed for that period of time? How many lives will we lose that way? Real quick, the emergency access will be allowed during closure of the bridge. So emergency Explain that, please. Yeah. How would that work? How does that work?</p>	<p>Sheriff Miera: Well, the railings are going to be off. So we couldn't let regular traffic go on the bridge with railings not on the bridge. In an emergency situation, when it's an ambulance, fire response, sheriffs, or state police, they will be able to cross the bridge. Only emergency response.</p> <p>David Quintana: And we're working with the sheriff's department. We'll work with first responders. And we'll ensure that we have first responders on both sides of the bridge. So that's something that's definitely not going to fall to the wayside if we work above the bridge. Emergency access would continue during the life of construction. And we're committed to that.</p>

5/7	Open House	<p>And when it comes to traffic, are there going to be construction trucks following through both lanes?</p>	<p>Again, I thought we'd dive on a gauge of temperature. We haven't made a decision on it. It's closure, full closure, or partial closure. One of the options is potentially leaving a lane of traffic open. We're still evaluating that. That bridge is extremely narrow. The contractor still needs some width, some area, to work in. It may be that we've looked at doing it piecemeal, an option to just open up the bridge every couple of hours for 20 minutes to let traffic go through that route.</p> <p>Again, if the bridge closes and you're in front of that line, it's going to be quicker to go down to Pilar or go through Hondo. It's still going to be a significant impact leaving the bridge open if we were to piecemeal it like that. So we're evaluating a lot of different options to construct on the bridge. And this is, again, over the next several months. We want to get down on a good option that everyone can live. It's not going to be good for everybody. And anything we do on that bridge is going to impact the community pretty significantly. So it's just a matter of how significant. And that's what we want this to, to be a major insignificance, a major closure that's really short duration or a long, drawn-out construction timeline. So it really is something that we're looking at. We're open to all options. And again, we just want to gauge the temperature of the</p>
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			community and see what makes the most sense for us.
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5/7	Open House	<p>Good evening, everybody. My name is Vernon Lujan. I'm with Taos Pueblo. I'm the Deputy Chief Operations Officer for the Pueblo. I'm also chairman of the Northern Pueblo's regional transportation planning organization. Sorry. Not the word to put out there. But I'd like to congratulate Mr. Quintana for his recent appointment as Secretary of Transportation. He's had some big shoes to fill. And this is probably his trial by fire. So I also want to thank everybody that's here: Senator Gonzalez, Mayor, Barrone, Mr. City Manager, Mr. Jaramillo, and all my colleagues, two kids, one, who brought attention from the teenage perspective of things because if you look at the statistics, a lot of those suicides were young people. So the Pueblo has been cooperating all these years, as Mr. Jaramillo and the sheriff Mayor pointed out, when people do commit what they do to themselves, sometimes they fall on the Pueblo side of the river. If you don't know, the boundary of the Pueblo lands is nearer that Rio Grande. So anybody that jumps on the east side, it becomes the responsibility of the tribal police to extract that body. And it's a very awful thing. I've been told by our Chief of Police and everybody that's involved that it's not a pleasant thing to do. And I appreciate what these guys do. But we're also afraid of people that, in the past, who have driven cars off the rim. That's why the east side of the entrance to the bridge is blocked out with barriers because we're in Pueblo's track to prevent that from happening. People are going to find a way to do what they're going to do. In all these mass shootings that you see and that I hear about in the news, people find ways to do what they're going to do regardless of what each</p>	
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		<p>side can do. But I have seen, when I went to Las Vegas a few times, that they built a new bridge over the river there by the Hoover Dam to replace the crossing there at the Hoover Dam. And you should have seen that technological marvel that happened there. And I don't know if you've driven to Las Vegas, but you should check it out because maybe we just need to demolish that bridge altogether because anything that we do that we need to use working on, any kind of weight that we put on, it's so old that it's not if you have to look at its structure to see if it will carry that weight. And I know that the NDOT's been using that argument for a long time, that it's not structurally sound. Is there anything on it other than what's already on it? And it's unsafe. It's narrow. It's rickety. And I said we demolish it and build a new bridge that's structurally sound and that will have these measures to keep people from doing what they do or at least deter them to an extent. You still have miles of gorge where people can hike up and jump off. So there's that issue. And so in the Pueblo, we recognize that there's people there that have a team for living and selling their wares and things, jewelry and stuff. But we have to make that decision. It was a hard decision to make because some of the vendors out there are tribal members. But we had to put those barriers there because we were appalled by people driving off and jumping off on the far side of the landmass there. So whatever we do in the river dam, whatever we do in the river land, we have to come to some kind of solution because it's giving Taos a really bad reputation, first of all. Some of these people that come here to do what they do are not from the next bridge. They travel hundreds and t</p>	
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		<p>thousands of miles to come over here and jump. It's unacceptable. So I hate to put that onus on Secretary Quintana. It is true. I think that we need to do something. And soon, not like five, six, seven years down the road, we've studied this for years and years. I think we're past that now. We have to do something. Thank you. Thank you.</p>	
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5/7	Open House	<p>I just wanted to ask well, first of all, so the past to go to I go to the dentist in Angel Fire. And I've had to schedule an extra 40 minutes or so because of the construction that was happening in the past between Taos and Angel Fire. What would the difference be in wait times of closing the bridge, and that's only for a month or six weeks, and they have to go around, and it's a longer commute, versus sitting there waiting for traffic to pass? Because either way, there's going to be a longer wait and a longer way to get in. Second of all, yeah, moms can go with their babies and nothing happens. But have you ever known someone whose baby jumped off right in front of them? Because I do. And I've been affected by suicides on that bridge my entire life. And so dozens of people, kids, teenagers, people my age, people younger. So as Sheriff Meara says, if people really want to end their life, they're going to do it. They'll find a way. But putting their brain from, "I'm going to do this," to, "Problem-solving, I have to get around this higher railing," it stops suicide statistically very often. So I am curious about the difference between the longer commute versus the longer wait for traffic in one lane to pass.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. So when we're talking, we're looking at several options. So one option is to close it and drive to Pilar on Western Road. I'm not sure what that would add, but I think it's, what, 38 miles, something like that. It's dangerous. It's dangerous. And then I don't know. South Road is dangerous. And I don't know what the detour is through Hondo. But yeah. But if we were to do it if we were to do it piecemeal, like I had said, that's one of the options we're looking at. In order for us to get any production, we would have to close the bridge for about two hours at a time, allow traffic maybe 20 minutes to 30 minutes, and then close it two hours and go through that. So I mean, if you're at the very front of that queue when you close the bridge, it's going to be about to re-door up regardless. So that's going to be an impact. Now, the other option may be doing it at night, but that's something that there's a lot of risk associated with that. We don't know. We don't affect the contractors' means and methods and how they can construct the project. How we can do that is when we put an incentive on it and force them to speed things up, and then they'll start looking outside the box on constructability. But that's really not a good option. So really, there's no good option to make this to install these detouring systems. So again, we're going to listen to</p>
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			<p>the community and pick the least impactful option for the community as a whole that we can. So thank you.</p>
5/7	Open House	<p>So my name is -----. I am a member of a couple of different community organizations, mental health working groups that have gotten especially active after last year's suicides. I work for True Kids One. But the comment that I'm going to make represents my own opinions. But I do have two questions. So I'm wondering if the best way to go about that is to ask my questions first and then my comment or just do it all at once. So first question, with the netting, what would stop somebody from just jumping off the netting and then crawling to the end of the netting and jumping off of that? Secondly, is there and I don't know if this defeats the purpose, but a possibility of creating lookout windows, possibly? I don't know if that would make the railings more climbable. But just a couple of thoughts and what things I wonder about. Secondly, I'm 25. And 10 years ago was one of the worst years of my life when I lost my first friend to suicide</p>	<p>Yeah. So I don't know that I mean, I'm not positive about what would stop anybody from being able to climb through the railing. And I think there's some difficulty in that. But there's a, will there's a way. And with regards did you have another question? What was? The climbing off the net and then jumping down? Or just? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think, like I said, if somebody might have the strength to do it, they would do it. And I don't know how difficult it is to make your way along that net. I mean, it's been installed in Golden Gate. I'm sure we can look and see if there's any instances of that happening and come back to you. And then as far as whether it's just because I know there's a lookout. We're looking at that's another that is</p>

		<p>off of that bridge. I have then endured that for years, as have many of my loved ones. And so I understand how four weeks can seem like a lot of time for somebody who's bending and somebody who's having to drive right around. But I also have now endured this for 10 years. And some people have for even longer. So four weeks really doesn't seem like that long to me. And even though I am the only one of my peers here today, I know that I represent a lot of their feelings about this as well, their anger, their sadness, and their desire to see something done. So I thank you for holding this forum in this space. But I would really appreciate and really advocate for pressure to please get this done as soon as possible.</p>	<p>something else that we're also going to be looking at to minimize the impact as much as possible. So again, we're leaving no stone unturned as far as what the ultimate detouring systems are going to be. And we're going to take the opportunity that this temporary fencing that we're going to put up here in the very short term provides us to make sure what we're doing right by everybody. Thank you.</p>
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5/7	Open House	<p>My name is --- . I'm going to try to speak, but my heart's pounding out of my chest. And I think I can speak to what KP and Madison referred to. I've also had personal experience there. But I guess my questions are, A, why are we talking about options? We've talked about options for 10, 15 years. And sir, we have had input meetings here. This is not the first one. We've had several input meetings. We've had meetings with the governor. We've had unending. I'm not going to go on. But we all know that we've given input. And it's our understanding it's my understanding that the raising the rails is where we're at. That's a sign outside. Come into the raising the rails conference. So why are we talking about netting? We're talking about get the rails raised. That's all we should be talking about. I don't know why you throw another option. We've got all the options. We've had engineers. We've had money already submitted, whatever you call it. Why are we talking about options? Put those things away. Let's start talking about raising the rails. That's where we're at. Okay. So I guess I'm confused why you keep saying options, options. I thought we came to an option. The final option is raise the rails. So maybe you can clarify that. The other thing is, why does it take eight weeks to put temporary fencing? I'm sorry. Just go down the street, load up your trailer with the fencing, and put it up. It shouldn't take eight more weeks. Okay? I just watched the last one on Easter Sunday. We can't wait any more weeks. I'm sorry. And I guess my last clarification in timing is, you said if we close it completely, it should take about four weeks. But if we don't close it completely, it should take months. So that doesn't compute for me. If you close it completely and it takes four</p>	<p>David Quintana: No. Thank you for your comment. We're committed to getting safety detouring up. And we're committed to doing it by next year. I think it's just very prudent for us to make sure that even if it's rails, we look at all of the possibilities, like cut-out option for view shedding, cameras, things like that. Again, I think something that's going to be installed and going to last for the next 40 years or so, taking a couple of months to make sure we're doing it right and doing the right thing, we're not delaying anything. We're still moving forward. It's just doing a little bit more due diligence. With regard to the constructability, I'll let our ADE for construction in District 5 speak on that. Justin Gibson: So we've taken a lot of time to look at that, the construction timeframe. The issue that we have is there is a federal regulation that's subpart K of Title 23, where if somebody's on that bridge and the rail's off and they're working, there cannot be a vehicle on that bridge. There is an alternative. They're asking positive barrier protection. So one of the things that we looked at, in New Mexico, we have a standard. We have a 40-foot concrete wall barrier that I've heard a few people talk about today, the Palmiero Bridge. Those usually weigh anywhere from 440 pounds a foot to 600 pounds a foot. I mean, 1,500 feet of it. That 1,500 feet, 400 to 600 pounds a foot, makes an infeasibility</p>
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		<p>weeks, then if you close lane by lane, then that might take eight weeks, not months. So I guess I don't understand how this operates. But it's not all computing for me. And it hasn't been computing for 10 years. And I don't know how many lives. Thank you.</p>	<p>for people to be working on one side and traffic to be open on the other. There are some other options about looking at it. We're trying to look at the old Model A4, an assembly line-type fashion. The issue is that when we have to let traffic through, everybody that's on that bridge, when a rail comes off, has to be tied off. They have to be in a full positive safety harness. And they have to have two lanyards that run backwards to a safety barrier. So if there's any infeasibility, if there's any technicality when taking off that rail, I have to have traffic held. So we don't have any idea how long that can be. We also have to do some cleaning. There's approximately three to five posts per panel. There's 84 panels. And we're anticipating that it's going to take up to a day just to clean where those posts are because the bridge is sewn. So it's not four weeks to eight weeks. It's a four weeks where I can have production at 24 hours a day with a huge incentive for the contractor to pay the overtime to we're going to hobble ourselves. And it's going to be months and very low production. We've talked about looking at doing things at night. The issue with working at night, I have to have light plants on the bridge. I have to account for that weight of the light plants. I have to have an engineer of record that's running calculations for all the vehicles, for every lift, every</p>
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			<p>pickup, every person that's out there to make sure that we're not overloading the bridge, that we're not getting unequal weighting for side. So we're looking at options.</p> <p>David Quintana: And we do like to hear your feedback. One of the things for commercial vehicles, we're looking at going all the way through Alamosa. We were only looking for shorter detours for passenger vehicles through Alamosa and through Espanola. That is very typical. When we have a low-rated bridge that's reduced, it goes through our Bridge Bureau. And we actually put out a notice to commercial vehicles that they have to follow this designated route.</p>
5/7	Open House	<p>I lost my son Alejandro Mariscal to the bridge March 14, 2023. Every time somebody takes a life, it's a memory back to me, trauma, insomnia, nightmares. I think the best thing is to close off the bridge and get it done as soon as possible instead of just waiting. I know it's people that are TP. I have friends there too. Don't get me wrong. But I think it would be best to close off the bridge completely to get it done sooner. Or if not, close off the bridge completely because as long as we keep waiting, we don't know how many lives are going to be taken. And my son was only 20 years old, Alejandro. We also need mental</p>	

		<p>health. We need programs for our teens, for our adults. It's very sad. I mean, when David Sandoval let go of that young boy from Espanola years ago, it should have been done since then, not now. We've lost so many people that it's just heartbreaking. There was a bridge that I used to walk with my kids, take pictures. I can't even go through that bridge because, thank you, that's where my son took his life. And I think that this needs to get done as soon as possible. And like you're saying, whoever wants to take their life, they're going to. But at least they say we care. At least we're doing something about that to raise these rails to the bridge. Thank you.</p>	
5/7	Open House	<p>My name is Dawn. I'm a vendor at the bridge. And I've personally saved three people, one dramatically saved, held onto her. And it's dangerous because the railing's only this high. And when they're in that state of mind, I mean, they are out of their mind. And they can do anything, including pull you over with them. So I support the lady that said, "Have walkers." The way to save the way I saved three was to be there as a vendor, to talk to them, talk them down, call the police. In that one instance, when she was really desperate to jump, I can still smell her hair. It took three of us to hold onto her. But we saved her by being there as a bridge vendor because we're there all the time. But what I wanted to so walking the bridge is important. Just security, just sitting in a car, it's not going to work. It's going to take people on that bridge to talk to them in person. Yeah. There you are. And that's how you'll save a few. The other thing I want to talk about, though, is the alternative. If you shut the bridge down and people I mean, I've got to take the shelf road down through the canyon. You know how dangerous that is? I</p>	

		<p>almost fell off that damn road. I've got the marks on my car to prove it when a boulder fell off and blocked the road. And I said, "Okay. Well, I'm going to make it home because I was almost to the top." And by then, I hit that boulder. And there was the edge right there. So I don't see why people have to be subjected. Or I don't see how the county or the state can force people to travel on that shelf road, either north or south, the shelf road over what's that bridge? John Dunn Bridge is even worse. And who's going to maintain it? I mean, is it going to be you're going to have people passing, coming, going fast, passing on that shelf road. It's too dangerous for any extended amount of time. Four weeks is going to go into you know how things go, two months, three months. So to close the bridge is not an option. It's too dangerous. And you're going to have tourists, people that have never driven down that shelf road, either south or north, to navigate that. You got to be kidding. They're going to end up in the Rio Grande. There'll be more tragedy from navigating this stupid shelf road, which really should be closed. And how many times hell up, state drop some dynamite and close that dangerous part going up into whatever you know what I'm talking about. So okay. I'm almost done. And are the feds involved? It's US Highway 64. So if you're going to close this road down, the bridge down, I will make my call to Secretary of Transportation, Sean Duffy, and let him know that the state is subjecting us people to travel a shelf road, a very dangerous shelf road. That is not an option, either north or south.</p>	
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5/7	Open House	<p>I am a lifetime resident here. And we're all here because we can't do nothing anymore. We can't sit on our hands and do nothing. And it's so multifaceted. But having lived in the city and driven the freeways over there, sometimes traffic is just backed up so far because there's always somebody trying to jump off of one of the bridges. Well, in Albuquerque, they have safeguards on all the freeway overpasses or viaducts, whatever you call them, except for the one on Carlisle. And that's the one that they always go after to jump off of is on Carlisle and the freeway. And what's a life worth? We all live here in Taos where we go through the canyon. And it's just two-way traffic. And often, they're doing work in there to replace the rails or remove a rock or something. And they have the guiding car that takes traffic one direction and comes back another direction. There's just too many people coming from Colorado, from TP, from going to Chama that that road shouldn't be blocked. And maybe it's more funding that we need that we can maybe have a 24-hour thing. It's going to take the whole community to help in this, especially the people who use the bridge on a daily basis. But putting the netting there, they're just going to use it like a trampoline. And if they really want to commit suicide, they're just going to go to the end and do a rollover. And it's not going to solve anything, I think, the high rails. And it's hardly going to be a view problem if it's going to save lives. And people are still going to go to the bridge to go and visit it. And the people who are vendors are still going to be able to be vendors there. Unless they want to demolish the entire bridge and start all over with a four-lane highway, that's another</p>	
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		<p>idea. But we're all short on money anyway.</p>	
<p>5/7</p>	<p>Open House</p>	<p>Hello. My name is ----. And for the last 26 years, I spent every week and every month fighting to raise the nets at the Golden Gate Bridge to end death there because I left off the Golden Gate Bridge in the year 2000 to attempt to take my life. I know this viscerally. My family knows it viscerally. My father would have moved heaven and earth to keep me safe for myself that day dealing with bipolar disorder and severe mental illness, not there because I wanted to be there but because I thought I had to die. And when we fought for the nets, we were fought against by the bridge directorate for the better part of 20 years. And it was brutal. But I can tell you this. As of year one of the nets being in place, for the first time in 90 years at the Golden Gate Bridge, the most frequented spot for suicides in the world, a 73% reduction in suicides at the Golden Gate Bridge. In year two of the nets being in place, an 87% reduction in suicides at the Golden Gate Bridge for the first time in 90 years. Reduction of access to lethal means is one of the single-only proven methods to reduce suicides effectively.</p> <p>It's done around the world. Where they build tall railings and nets across the</p>	

		<p>globe at buildings, tall structures, railways, and bridges, suicides often drop to zero, nil, or they drop in the metropolitan counties around that area because you show people you care. And when you show people you care, they don't take their lives. They're given time, which is what they need to keep going, to give themselves an assessment to say, "I need help now." Thank you for your time.</p>	
5/7	Open House	<p>I'm ----. I'm a resident of Taos. This issue is not a new issue. This has been going on for 40 years since I've been back in Taos. I have watched and seen our young people jump off that bridge, people commit murder on that bridge. There are people off of the bridge. I don't think we have any more time. We need to act. One more 16-year-old kid, what is that life worth to us as a community? Are we going to sit here and just do nothing and have another community meeting to discuss options? There are no more options. We need to save the lives of our young people. That's who we need to concentrate on. It's the lives of our young and the youth. We can't wait any longer. Listen to this gentleman, what he just said. 13 people jumped off. Hold on. This is my turn. This is my turn, sir. It's the life of our youth. For whatever reason, God did not take him. They put him in a position to save other lives. So you need to listen to him. He has experience. He's one of the victims that was able to live and save more lives. I can't stand watching our young people die anymore needlessly. And it is true. They need mental health services all over the country, not just here. It's not unique. And talking to them is an option. But you can't be there 24/7 at 3:30 in the</p>	

		<p>morning or 3:35 or 4 o'clock when they decide to do it. And no, you can't. You can't be there 24/7. The option of having people walking up and maybe that's an option too. But preventative measures have to happen. Okay.</p>	
5/7	Open House	<p>My name is ----. I'm a resident of the town of Taos. I have three quick things to say. One, the rendering of the netting is off. The Golden Gate Bridge, it's at a 45-degree angle so that if you jump into the netting, you're trapped. Okay? That's really important. Or you could put bad netting like they have in the military where if you jump into it, your leg's going to fall through and you're trapped. And then somebody can come and rescue you. That's one thing I wanted to say. The second thing is I can't believe I'm sitting at your table. I would like where the four pop-outs are for there to be sheets of plexiglass so that people can have a nice, unobstructed view. You could put little holes in it for the wind, etc. And the third thing I want to say is I'm nervous like you. I'm a mental health professional. I've been a psychotherapist for 30 years. And to say if someone is going to commit suicide, they're going to do it anyway is a fallacy. That's not science. Suicidal ideation is transitory. It comes and goes. And we have to get people when they're coming down off of it. And they'll talk about it. So if somebody's suicidal, a teenager, and there's an accessible gun at home, it's not locked up, they're going to use it. If it's locked up and they can't use it, then they don't die. And we have a reputation for</p>	

		<p>a suicide bridge here which attracts people who want to commit suicide. So I think it's our obligation as the citizens of Taos County to stop that and to not let people kill themselves anymore.</p>	
5/7	Comment Form	<p>The tendency for people is to blame the government for everything that is wrong with the world. The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge completed in 1965 was the pinnacle of bridge design for its time; the guardrails were of a height to prevent accidental falling over given the average person's height. Now, climbing over the rails and jumping off is a deviant act of trespass on to an area not permitted by NMDOT. The bridge was constructed as a modern conveyance from the East rim to the west rim negating the need to use other treacherous routes, i.e., Pilar Bridge and John Dunn Bridge. Yes suicide is such a sad action to take and there needs to be much more early intervention to prevent it. It is the right thing and right time that NMDOT takes action to update the design to prevent such tragedy from happening so often. I do not believe NMDOT is culpable up to this point; the awareness is there and so is the budget. Note: Pilar and Arroyo Hondo are not viable detour routes they amount to sheep trails which will result in serious accidents or deaths. We people of Taos have traveled these roads out of absolute necessity - fire wood hauling.</p>	

5/7	Comment Form	<p>I fully acknowledge the need to make the bridge safer but I am also concerned about visual/aesthetic implications of the solution to the safety issues. This bridge is a destination for many visitors and likely adds to the local economy as these visitors spend money with the local businesses. The views from and of the bridge are also worth preserving. I am hopeful that the ultimate safety solution makes the bridge actually safer and preserves views from/of the bridge. If you haven't already, please look at what was done on the Golden Gate Bridge as a solution to the same problem. They put netting under the bridge thereby eliminating ruining the bridge's aesthetics. The solution has also shown good results. From a previous average of 96 deaths per year. Those have been reduced to the low 20s. *Definitely not an option to close the bridge completely. Close one lane. I would like to know about the effectiveness of each solution and the cost difference.</p>	
5/7	Comment Form	<p>This lawsuit against the state is LONG overdue! How many more lives need to be lost? What is a life worth? The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge is now being called "Suicide Bridge". How many have already died? At least 45 people. The viaducts including over the freeways have metal guards to prevent jumpers. They work. Talks 2015-2018 Whoa! Talk, Talk, Talk. 2026 Still talking, still nothing done.</p>	
5/7	Comment Form	<p>Please DO NOT raise the rails. The bridge is not broken. 13 people still jumped after the Golden Gate Bridge intervention. Blocking the view of nature takes away a known stress reliever. Putting a rail up will cause harm for those of us who use it for stress relief.</p>	

5/7	Comment Form	Close the bridge to keep it safe. And get it fixed, get the phone working. And camera playing working cause my son Alejandro Mariscal took his life on March 14, 2023. Still nothing has been done till this day.	
5/7	Comment Form	How will you make the switch back road (to Pilar) safer for us to drive? Many of the curves are single lane! Big trucks barely fit. How will you stop people from just flying off at the curve? The new suicide method! The road with all the potholes, wash board is very slippery even in good weather, yet alone dark, wet, etc. That road is not a good option.	
5/7	Mail	If the bridge must be closed, please do it at night and open it during the day. The favored option of closing both lanes forces us to use either of 2 shelf roads which are very dangerous, unsafe to drive for obvious reasons. This presents a hazardous travel condition especially for divers not familiar with the 2 shelf roads. NMDOT cannot force us to endanger our lives, especially elderly, RV & truck & motorcycle drivers by risking our lives daily driving down a dangerous and unsuitable rocky rutted road down the side of steep cliffs with no guardrails!! Imagine tourists navigating a dangerous shelf road!! Option 2, closing one lane, will cause 2 hour waits with 15 minute drive thru is not good either - for up to a year to deal with this chaos! I prefer netting rather than raising the railing. Faster, cheaper, lighter in weight & less construction. Closing both lanes will be chaotic and dangerous and confusing, forcing us to chose 1 of 2 routes down a shelf road, poorly maintained and very unsafe, and NMDOT did not address this dangerous situation for thousands of drivers. More public meetings needed to voice their concerns over NMDOT's	

		<p>avored position of closing both lanes to traffic for 4-8 weeks forcing us to use unsafe shelf roads, North or South. The focus of future meetings needs to be on the 3 options vaguely discussed at this meeting. Enough of the crying moms whose kids jumped and have now created this chaos for thousands of us on the west rim of the gorge. The focus of future meetings must be on the 3 options presented during the long, complicated construction of the railing. If NMDOT is going to force us on the west side to navigate unsafe, dangerous roads, then we need to hear how NMDOT and Taos County are going to make the 2 shelf roads safe. Impossible!!! More meetings are needed to focus on impact of 3 options during construction and on bridge closure.</p>	
5/8	Email	<p>I attended your " Open House" regarding the proposed Raise the Rails CN 5102000 project last night. I am writing to object to this Forum held on May 07.2026 being used as a " public hearing " or "Public Comment " opportunity for this project. In the Public Facing Documents and advertisement for this meeting, no indication of public Commenting was indicated or provided. It was billed only as an " Open House" and that billing does not rise to the level of Public Commenting Period . In addition is was billed as " Raise the Rails Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Project. Join us at an open house to learn more." It did not use the Words " PROPOSED" and led the public to believe the project has been finalized, without required Public Hearing on the Proposal.</p> <p>I am requesting a Proper Hearing be Held that will meet the Requirements of a " Public Meeting" or " Public Hearing ", and Billed and advertised as</p>	

		such with the opportunity for "Public Input " as required by Law be scheduled. The meeting held last night did not meet this requirement. I believe that might have been intentional. Informal polling shows a 3 - 1 opposition to this project and the Public needs to be involved and not tricked into believing it is a done deal.	
5/10	Website	We've lost a lot of people on the bridge, but if people want to end their lives, they're going to figure out a way instead of spending money on the bridge. Why not spend money on programs that help people who are desperate, who have nowhere to live who have no food who have no one that loves them programs that give housing to people and not treat them like second class citizens programs that listen to people that have mental health people who can help them, etc.	
5/10	Website	I house 12 people in Carson, west of the gorge bridge. A complete bridge closure would devastate my non profit and the 12 people we house. Many work in Taos and would add 45 minutes to their already long 45 minute commute. Our doctor and dental appointments in Taos are already scheduled months in advance. The bridge is the only reliable way to get there. Please dont close it completely. Thank you.	
5/10	Website	Want to clarify there are no other options to be considering. You are "raising the rails", please. We have reviewed options for way too long. Do not wait any longer. Get this project started as soon as possible. I thought I heard in this meeting that you need to "gather more input", "carefully review the options". There has been reviews	

		<p>and input gathering for many years, and many deaths have ensued. I vote for the complete closure for 4 weeks with alternative routes clearly communicated. Also, it was clear the Sec of DOT doesn't know what these alternative routes consist of so that might me a step in this process. DOT may need to make some improvements to the alternative routes, as well. I appreciated the explanation on how emergency services would still be available during construction. That should be made clear to the public. For now, PLEASE place the temporary fencing ASAP. Thanks for the opportunity to express our concerns.</p>	
5/17	Email	<p>Thank you for the efforts of NMDOT to address public safety at the Gorge Bridge. I live along West Rim Road about 1 mile from the Gorge Bridge. My partner and I have serious concerns about a bridge closure for the rail raising project. Public safety where we live has been an increasing concern over the past year as property crime has become more frequent. Currently, it takes first responders 30-45 minutes to respond to an incident where we live. What will happen if the bridge is closed for weeks?? Would any first responder be able to get to our home within an hour?? In addition, the sheriff has finally implemented a regular patrol in our area that I fear will not happen if the bridge is closed. In the height of tourist season, i.e. the worst time of year for crimes, closing the bridge would be dangerous to the residents out here. Closing the bridge completely for this project poses significant threats to our safety where we live. In addition, it would double the drive time for basic services that we access in Taos if the bridge were closed. I am a caregiver for my partner who is in a wheelchair. Also, we have</p>	

		<p>been waiting for months to have a well drilled. If the bridge closes, this would postpone our project even more and currently, we rely on hauling drinking water from elsewhere as our water has not been safe to drink for over a year now.</p> <p>In short, closing the bridge for weeks to raise the rails is not a minor inconvenience for us, it poses serious threats to our health and safety. We encourage NMDOT to plan the implementation of this project keeping the bridge open to traffic for the duration of the construction. Our health and safety depends on it. Thank you for your time.</p>	
5/17	Website	<p>As a small business owner who has lived in Tres Piedras for close to 40 years, I strongly protest the idea of closing the entire bridge for a month as has been proposed. This would be devastating to the lives and livelihoods of literally several thousand people in western Taos County. There are very few alternatives for us to get to Taos and all of them involve many more miles and hours of travel time while fuel prices are sky high. I will be submitting a much more detailed email describing the many reasons for my opposition to this idea. I also think that you need to hold meetings in the communities most affected, which would be Tres Piedras and Carson. I didn't even know about this Taos meeting.</p>	
5/17	Website	<p>Putting up the rail is an unfortunate necessity that must happen. However, care needs to be taken with this idea of completely closing the bridge for four weeks straight. There are enough people out here on the other side of the bridge that if someone has an emergency or there is a fire or need for police or ambulance, then it could literally become a life or death situation if the bridge is closed. Not to</p>	

		<p>mention that many people out here work as support workers in Taos such as social workers, psychiatrists, nurses, etc, that need to have access to the town of Taos without having to drive an hour or more out of the way. Thank you for allowing comments.</p>	
5/17	Website	<p>Please only shut down one lane at a time so we can still get to and from town living on the mesa!!!</p>	
5/19	Website	<p>I live west of the gorge bridge and closing the bridge for a long duration would be great hardship for me and my wife as we have to go into Taos for frequent medical appointments. I believe the best option is to have one lane open and work at night. People underestimate the effect of the wind as it blows constantly 20-35 mph out here during the day. The wind calms down at night, its is cooler to work, and traffic is a minimum.</p>	
5/20	Website	<p>Raising the rails is not needed, don't destroy the view. Take this money and use it for mental health care it would save more lives that way. Shutting down the bridge is not feasible as there are 4K people live west of the bridge that need to work and travel into Taos daily. Alternate routes that were presented are non safe and need to be repaired before any use, they are not safe!</p>	

5/21	Email	<p>As a more than 40 year resident of Taos County west of the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, I am very disappointed that 1.) only a single not properly advertised hearing was held in Taos regarding potential Rio Grande Gorge Bridge actions that affect mostly people who do not live in Taos itself, and 2.) among the proposed actions is a total closure of the Gorge Bridge for upwards of a full month. I personally did not know of this May 7th meeting ahead of time and only became aware of this comment period deadline this past weekend. The fact that your agencies have made minimal outreach to those who will be most affected by any action on the Gorge Bridge, specifically all of the residents west of the Rio Grande, while considering these kinds of actions is wrong by any measure. That an actual full closure of the bridge is being seriously considered for any amount of time including upwards of a month opens up a great deal of negative outcomes for everyone in the communities of Carson and Tres Piedras and surrounding areas, to say nothing about the many tourists, commercial carriers, and travelers that will be impacted. Everyone is aware of the tragedies involved with the handful of people every year who choose to end their lives by jumping off of the bridge, and of course we are sorry for this. But to consider a total closure of the Gorge Bridge for an extended period of time could potentially result in no emergency services available in the advent of medical and/or accident emergencies. A week, month, or longer could very likely itself result in a number of unnecessary deaths because emergencies will take a long to to be responded to in a timely fashion. This has to be absolutely taken into account in your</p>	
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		<p>considerations.</p> <p>Then there is the impact to people's lives. Many people who live on the west side of the Gorge Bridge work in and around Taos. With no safe or reasonable alternatives to getting to Taos other than 50 to 100 mile detours each way, the burden on west Gorge locals have a huge burden. This is made much worse by the current \$4.50+ regular and \$5.60+ diesel prices which already is having a major impact on our income and budgets, and additional 100 to close to 200 mile round trips will be financially devastating. I am purposely not mentioning either the John Dunn or Orilla Verde crossing options because they are totally untenable as options both for the amount of diverted traffic and dirt and winding one lane roads that are impassible by anything other than four wheel drive vehicles without trailers. In fact, common sense would make both of these options also subject to closure for public safety.</p> <p>I've added District 5 engineer Justin Gibson to this email because he is already aware of the hardships endured by many in the Tres Piedras area due to the US Highway 285 road construction project that took 4 years to complete. That had a major impact on my business and it also caused an impact to my wife whose position at UNM-Taos requires her to regularly travel to town. Both of us would be seriously impacted by a complete bridge closure, as would many hundreds if not several thousand western Taos County and Rio Arriba County residents. We ask you to VERY CAREFULLY consider all of the potential safety, emergency services, and financial impacts to the residents of this area before making any final</p>	
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		<p>decision. I also urge you to actually engage the most affected parties, which are not the residents of the town of Taos but all of us on the west side of the Gorge, before making a decision that could potentially upend thousands of people's lives.</p> <p>Could the residents of our area be able to handle one way closures on the bridge? Yes, even though it would be an inconvenience, and the State of New Mexico would have to control this in a very sensible way. However, as I have pointed out above, a total closure of the bridge for any extended period of time would have disastrous consequences on many levels for far too many people and businesses to even be considered by the State and Federal governments. Please consider all of the ramifications before finalizing a plan and make sure you get the western Taos County residents more involved in this.</p>	
5/21	Website	<p>I live in the Tres Orejas neighborhood on the west side of the bridge. I am glad to hear you are doing something to reduce suicides from the bridge. However, I request that you not close the bridge during construction. Leaving one lane open at a time would make a huge impact on my life and the lives of hundreds of people who commute to Taos every day from the west side of the gorge. That highway is not just for tourists, it is a lifeline for people from Carson, Tres Orejas, Two Peaks, Cielito Lindo, Cielo Azul, and even Tres Piedras.</p> <p>People with kids in school or jobs in town need to go back and forth at least</p>	

		<p>twice a day and any alternate route is very long, rough and even dangerous. The cumulative cost to those of us stranded on the west side of the bridge is massive and it would be unconscionable for you to take that course of action. I ask you, as our elected officials, to represent us and our needs before the needs of construction contractors or budget committees. Thank you!</p>	
5/21	Website	<p>How do you propose that residents who daily go over the bridge will be able to access the bridge whilst this project goes ahead? The alternative to access Taos is not feasible via West Rim Road on a dirt road that is not usable in many conditions and dangerous with rock falls. It is not feasible to fully close the bridge for this work</p>	
5/21	Website	<p>There has to be some way to fix bridge without total closures. There are too many old people and young children to not be able to get emergency help and get to school out here. I am 76 and have 4 grandchildren here. We NEED to get help when needed. Thank you</p>	
5/21	Website	<p>Night closures seem most practical. However, regardless of bridge closure times the county and state MUST have multiple life flight medical evacuation plans and vehicles ready for action. Folks will need medical attention 24/7, not according to repair schedules. Driving down the gorge in emergencies will not be an option. Many vehicles west of the gorge won't make it down to Pilar even during non-emergency travel. Many need access to medical attention and perception medicine in town many times a week. Flash flooding or other unpredictable weather events happen in Taos county year round. Waiting in line for hours to cross the bridge in daytime hours will also potentially cause medical emergency events. The bridge clearly</p>	

		<p>needs safety repairs asap. That is not in question. The way to go about it needs practical reasonable planning for half the country as well as those traveling through for business or pleasure. Thank you.</p>	
5/21	Website	<p>Hello. My name is --- and I live in Tres Orejas, officially known on record as -- --</p> <p>Located west of the Rio Grande Gorge off -----</p> <p>I have lived here 37 years.</p> <p>My role now is President of TONA: Tres Orejas Neighborhood Association.</p> <p>This comment is my own personal take on raising the rails.</p> <p>I am not in favor of this project.</p> <p>To me it's just the bandaid for the suicide problem. The existing bridge is old n will need to be replaced in 30-40 years.</p> <p>All the west rim residents need to have safe access across the bridge. The idea for us to use hwy 567, a narrow one lane unpaved road to Taos Jct Bridge</p> <p>And on to Pilar at Hwy 68 and on to Taos, is putting us residents at high risk, economic hardship, ill health, high stress and anxiety levels.</p> <p>The raising rails is not the answer. The suicidal mindset</p> <p>Is: "where there's a will there's a way."</p> <p>Nothing will stop one from jumping or any other method of choice. I oppose this project.</p>	

5/22	Email	<p>I spend the summers at my home at Tres Orejas, Carson Estates on the west side of the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. Like many residents of our community, I am elderly and need to have ready access to the medical facilities and other services in Taos. To close the bridge completely for any considerable period of time could present a life-threatening situation for me and my neighbors whose vehicles or driving skills will not allow them to take the difficult, dangerous, and sometimes impassible route through the Gorge on Highway 567. Diverting all eastbound traffic onto this route is not a realistic option and would cut off Carson Estates, Carson, Ojo Caliente, and Tres Piedras, not to mention all eastbound tourist traffic, from ready access to Taos. It would have a severe economic impact on local businesses. Please take as long as required to complete the construction in a way that does not endanger, harm, and severely inconvenience our local communities.</p>	
5/22	Website	<p>I commute from Arroyo Seco to Ojo Caliente and really love my job -- that's why I make the hour and change commute. I think the best choice for the community and myself is to not close the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge entirely, as many people rely on it on a daily basis. Many people live out on the mesa and will become detached from resources in town (including emergency services) in a way that's really significant. Thanks for your time, I really appreciate that you are open to the opinions of the community.</p>	

5/27	Email	<p>Good afternoon , we had a monthly neighborhood meeting a couple nights ago and I learned about the upcoming construction on the bridge to prevent suicide “jumpers”. My family and I live on the west side of the bridge and my children are in school in the town of Taos. I also work near the Taos plaza. We drive to town daily, at least twice a day the idea that the bridge could possibly be closed for an entire month or daily closed with a two hour delay is very frightening. We all know how long roadwork actually takes in Taos so I don’t believe closing it for an entire month would even be enough time. Also doing this in winter could possibly mean snow days where there’s no work being done and we are forced to drive on on maintained icy switchback. Our only other options are going through Pilar and Hondo, which are too very unmaintained and dangerous roads. I understand the concern for safety on the bridge to prevent future jumpers. However, I think the dangers of closing the bridge outweigh the possibility of future accidents. Not being able to have emergency vehicles have access to us or us not being able to get to town is very concerning. I know you guys are in a pickle about what to do and there is no easy answers. But please don’t close the bridge, there is a huge community out here In tres Piedras, Carson, tres Orejas and even Ojo Caliente including many elderly people. We feel the effects massively when the bridge is closed, even for just a couple hours. We are either trapped on one side or the other. We cannot rely on the the Pilar and Hondo Roads. They are super dangerous and unmaintained, and if that becomes the bypass, they will turn into a crowded Super Highway that I’m sure local neighbors will not appreciate and there will be even more</p>	
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		<p>accidents. The majority of jumpers seem to be out-of-towners, please don't cater to the needs of strangers, but put the priority of us locals first. The deaths are very sad but doing this isn't going to bring anyone back to life, and where there's a will there's a way and people will find it no matter what. \$8 million could be used so much better to actually repair the bridge or for mental health facilities. We all know these railings or nets are going to prevent nothing. This is an incredibly dangerous idea, I don't have a magic answer, but there's got to be another way. I just needed to reach out and let you know of our concerns, best of luck, figuring this out.</p>	
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5/28	Website	<p>I live in the Earthships beyond the bridge. I work in town every day. I am deeply concerned with the traffic and risk this increases on an already poor road thru Pilar, I am concerned with increase in the cost of gas that it will take anyone out here twice as long if not longer to get to work.</p> <p>And I am concerned about emergency vehicles getting to people over here. What is a house is on fire, or someone has a medical emergency....the hospital is already a far distance but now people will be at higher risk.</p> <p>In the cities when they need to do work on a freeway, they close down only at night and work during the night only. Open for traffic again the next morning when people go to work. This is a way more logical solution than closing it completely. Also we have lost faith that this large undertaking will only take four weeks.</p> <p>Please consider one of the other options. This cannot be an option with how much strain to the people, the risk and the unsafe roads that we would travel</p>	
5/28	Email	<p>Please do not close the bridge! Many people work every day and this will be a major, major issue. My small, low to the ground car cannot make it to Questa any other way. It is my family's preference to have one lane open. Thanks for considering,</p>	
5/29	Website	<p>Complete closure of the Rio Grande bridge is not a realistic or practical option. I would be impossible to divert all traffic to the crossings at Taos Junction or John Dunne bridge.</p>	
5/29	Website	<p>Please don't close the bridge entirely 24/7 This would be really bad for those of us living west of the bridge. The alternate routes to Taos via Pilar or John Dunne</p>	

		Bridge are not in good enough shape for the traffic.	
5/29	Website	Entirely closing the bridge would be terrible for us! We are open most to the one lane option. Second choice would be at night. We own a business in Tres Piedras and need to be able to get to Taos. We have an employee that needs to be able to get to our business as well and she would not be able to work with us if she has to drive an extra 2 hours to get to the property.	
5/31	Website	Closing the Rio Grande bridge completely for raising the rails would cause the Greater World and other residents on the west side of the bridge loss of access to work and loss of reasonable access to medical services. Opening one lane would have the least amount of inconvenience to everyone.	
6/1	Website	I sometimes see parents walking on the bridge with their child on their shoulders! The poor kid was scared out of her mind with her hair going horizontal she was shaking her head so hard. So it needs to be at least that high!	

5/23	Email	<p>Good afternoon , we had a monthly neighborhood meeting a couple nights ago and I learned about the upcoming construction on the bridge to prevent suicide “jumpers”. My family and I live on the west side of the bridge and my children are in school in the town of Taos. I also work near the Taos plaza. We drive to town daily, at least twice a day the idea that the bridge could possibly be closed for an entire month or daily closed with a two hour delay is very frightening. We all know how long roadwork actually takes in Taos so I don’t believe closing it for an entire month would even be enough time. Also doing this in winter could possibly mean snow days where there’s no work being done and we are forced to drive on on maintained icy switchback. Our only other options are going through Pilar and Hondo, which are too very unmaintained and dangerous roads. I understand the concern for safety on the bridge to prevent future jumpers. However, I think the dangers of closing the bridge outweigh the possibility of future accidents. Not being able to have emergency vehicles have access to us or us not being able to get to town is very concerning. I know you guys are in a pickle about what to do and there is no easy answers. But please don’t close the bridge, there is a huge community out here In tres Piedras, Carson, tres Orejas and even Ojo Caliente including many elderly people. We feel the effects massively when the bridge is closed, even for just a couple hours. We are either trapped on one side or the other. We cannot rely on the the Pilar and Hondo Roads. They are super dangerous and unmaintained, and if that becomes the bypass, they will turn into a crowded Super Highway that I’m sure local neighbors will not appreciate and there will be even more</p>	
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		<p>accidents. The majority of jumpers seem to be out-of-towners, please don't cater to the needs of strangers, but put the priority of us locals first. The deaths are very sad but doing this isn't going to bring anyone back to life, and where there's a will there's a way and people will find it no matter what. \$8 million could be used so much better to actually repair the bridge or for mental health facilities. We all know these railings or nets are going to prevent nothing. This is an incredibly dangerous idea, I don't have a magic answer, but there's got to be another way. I just needed to reach out and let you know of our concerns, best of luck, figuring this out.</p>	
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