

## **Background:**

The comments included in this document were derived from several sources, including the Public Hearing for the New Mexico Rail Runner Express service extension to Santa Fe held on August 21, 2007 and two more public meetings held on October 23, 2007 and October 30, 2007 respectively. Some comments were also generated from emails or phone calls as a result of these meetings. Specific references to home addresses or names have been omitted from the comments for privacy reasons. For further information on project plans and updates please consult the New Mexico Rail Runner Express website at [www.nmrailrunner.com](http://www.nmrailrunner.com)

## **Comments on Traffic**

**General:** *A traffic analysis report was generated as part of the project. The analysis evaluated existing conditions and future conditions at railroad crossings and key intersections in the vicinity of railroad crossings. The analysis assumed worse case conditions to assess potential traffic impact. These conditions included no mode shift from auto drivers to rail and liberal estimates of gates down times. The report also analyzed queue lengths to determine if queues caused by trains would disrupt the function of nearby intersections, or if queue lengths at intersections would cause problems with cars backing up over railroad crossings. Due to the relative infrequent nature of train movements (2 per hour) the traffic analysis did not indicate changes in the Level of Service (LOS), a common traffic engineering measurement of intersection performance, at either Zia and St. Francis or Cerrillos and St. Francis. The realignment of the track as it crosses Zia addressed one of the major issues identified in the analysis; cars backing up onto the track crossing at Zia. The traffic analysis did point out that these two intersections will grow increasingly more congested over time.*

*A number of concerns have been expressed regarding the potential impacts Rail Runner trains will have on traffic circulation in the Santa Fe area. Most of the comments that have been received expressed concerns about additional traffic delay at the railroad crossing and Zia Road or at the intersection of St. Francis Drive and Cerrillos Road. A couple of comments have also been received expressing concerns about access from Galisteo to Rodeo Road or Zia Road, and the potential for train delays to make this situation worse.*

*The research conducted as part of this project suggests that traffic congestion in Santa Fe is likely to get much worse over time. There are several factors that contribute to this future possibility. First, the core area of Santa Fe is a popular destination for many trip markets including work trips, recreational trips, tourist trips and business trips. Second, over the next 20 years there are no plans to add new roadway capacity into this area, primarily because new roadway capacity would require new rights of way which is a scarce commodity in this area. There are also significant challenges with parking. Even if it were possible to accommodate the flow of more auto travel into this area, finding additional parking capacity is a significant challenge. Third, housing prices in Santa Fe have risen dramatically over the past ten years. This trend is expected to continue.*

*Current home prices make it exceedingly difficult for most of the Santa Fe labor market to find housing within the Santa Fe area. As a result Santa Fe imports a great deal of labor on a daily basis. These “work trips” are particularly problematic because they typically take place in the morning and afternoon peak hours. Lastly the Santa Fe metropolitan area is expected to continue growing. Year 2030 population estimates from the SFMPO suggest that the Santa Fe Metro area is anticipated to grow by another 100,000 people between 2002 and 2030.*

*When all four of these factors are combined there is good reason to be concerned about the future of auto mobility in the central part of Santa Fe. As noted above, one of the contributing factors to the problem is the number of workers that drive into Santa Fe from other areas. Today there are about 4500 workers that live in the Albuquerque area that work in Santa Fe. Many of these people work in the central area of Santa Fe for government agencies or private businesses. These trips have a profound effect on peak hour travel in the Santa Fe area. The northbound peak hour volume on St. Francis just south of Zia Road for example is approaching 2100 vehicles. Between 70 and 80 % of this volume is made up of traffic from out of town (primarily Albuquerque). These markets are prime candidates for train patronage. While the Rail Runner service cannot hope to solve all traffic issues in Santa Fe, it provides a considerable solution for a portion of the problem. The downside is additional delay caused by trains at crossings during the gates down condition. At Zia and St. Francis the impact is anticipated to be about 57 seconds twice per hour. To minimize this impact the NMDOT is committed to restoring lost time, caused by the Rail Runner, by designing a new signal plan for this intersection (provided the City of Santa Fe approves) that allots an equal amount of green time back to Zia road in the am period, from green time currently provided to St. Francis Drive. In addition the NMDOT is working with the City of Santa Fe to identify other potential improvements in this area including the possibility of re-aligning the intersection of Galisteo and Zia Road further to the west so the eastbound left turn lane can be lengthened.*

*At Cerrillos and St. Francis the tracks cross the intersection at a diagonal. This intersection already operates poorly in the pm peak and is expected to get worse over time. The gates down time at this intersection is estimated at 64 seconds with another 22 seconds allotted to clear the intersection before the gates go down. This will occur twice per hour during the peak periods. The design of this intersection has already been optimized as much as possible. Free rights from southbound St. Francis to westbound Cerrillos and northbound St. Francis to Eastbound Cerrillos will not be affected by trains passing through the intersection. Railroad crossing gates have been placed in staggered positions to maintain as much of the current through and left turn capacity as possible. The NMDOT is re-evaluating the gates down times to determine if more time can be removed from the projected condition. It is also worth noting that half of the traffic is always stopped at this intersection, so the impact of additional delay will only apply to half of the traffic stream. Some have suggested that the train service should terminate at the South Capital Complex to avoid potential impacts to Cerrillos and St. Francis. While this solution would certainly eliminate the delay, the end result would still be a congested intersection, and the loss of potential rail markets in the core area of Santa Fe, and of*

*course the loss of any opportunity to get people to and from the core area by train. For this particular intersection there are no easy solutions if the goal is to have no net impact on traffic delay. Grade separating the tracks from the roadway would be very expensive and would only have a minimal benefit. In order to help minimize the impact of additional delay at this intersection the NMDOT has committed to funding a new signal timing plan for the portion of St. Francis from I-25 to Cerrillos Road. In addition the NMDOT is looking at ways the New Mexico State Government can encourage its employees to use public transportation or otherwise reduce their impact on the Santa Fe Street system e.g. flexible work hours.*

1. I live on Vereda Rodiando which is right behind Galisteo. I am concerned about the traffic at Rodeo; it takes me a long time to exit Vereda Rodiando with the traffic coming from both directions east and west.

*See General Comments Above. Based on the location of your street it is difficult to tell from your comments if this is a general concern or a specific concern related to train service. This may be a situation where the gates down condition on Rodeo at the railroad tracks may actually help (even though it may be infrequent). The gates down condition will create a gap in the traffic flow for the westbound Rodeo traffic.*

2. Also the possibility of a train station at Zia will result in more traffic using Galisteo toward Rodeo Road and this may result in the need for a traffic signal at Rodeo.

*See General Comments Related to Stations. If a station were located in this area, potential new traffic issues would need to be addressed as part of the station development.*

3. Strongly support the overpass or underpass idea for the tracks.

*Both of these ideas are beyond the project resources. Elevating or undergrounding the train would add tens of millions of dollars to the cost of the project and would bring other issues into play. Elevating the train would create a significant new visual impact along the alignment and would also create larger noise impacts, however it would be less disruptive to the roadway system to construct. Placing the train underground would have very significant and disruptive consequences for the street system as well as any underground utilities (water, sewer, power, communications).*

4. St. Michael's Drive – accident waiting to happen – do something!

*New railroad crossing gates and lights will be placed at this crossing.*

5. Traffic impact on Zia and Galisteo

*See general Comments Above. Additional green time to Zia Road and possible realignment of Galisteo may help with this situation.*

6. If you don't want to divide Santa Fe in two, you have to keep the traffic flowing on Zia, Cerrillos, etc. One station south of town and one downtown is ENOUGH!! But most importantly you have to keep the traffic flowing at the intersection or you will have the rich east side and the other side of the tracks!

*See General Comments Above. The NMDOT has committed to several measures to reduce and in some cases eliminate any new traffic delay caused by trains. Due to other factors, traffic congestion is likely to get worse over time, train service or not. The rail service presents a significant opportunity to help with travel demand management and ultimately more efficient traffic flow in the City of Santa Fe.*

7. Several audience members are bringing up the problem of traffic impacts to those who live off of Rodeo Rd. and Zia Rd. in the area I call "state workers ghetto." The impacts are really great for ingress and egress, and to an area that in Santa Fe could never be viewed as disadvantaged. How will our neighborhood be accessed?

*See General Comments above. The NMDOT has already committed to several measures to eliminate additional traffic delay at Zia Road. Access to and from Zia Road and Rodeo Road appears to be a problem that will require a concerted effort to address, since the primary cause is auto traffic on these facilities. Train service in this corridor presents a significant opportunity provide alternatives to auto travel.*

8. How will traffic at Cerrillos and St. Francis be managed. This is one of the busiest intersections in the State.

*See General Comments above. As noted the NMDOT is in the process of evaluating the feasibility of reducing the gates down time at this intersection. Even so the train will cause additional traffic delay as it passes through this intersection. .*