

Fifty Years of  
People, Place & Progress

**MRCOG**  
**50**  
**YEARS**  
1969-2019



**2019**

**MRCOG**  
**50**  
**YEARS**  
1969-2019



Albuquerque in 1960. Photo courtesy of Albuquerque Museum Historical Photo Archive



**Dewey V. Cave**  
MRCOG Executive Director



**Gregory Hull**  
MRCOG Board Chair

## Looking back on 50 Years of MRCOG

The Mid-Region Council of Governments has come a long way from its small offices on the 10th floor of the Western Bank building in Downtown Albuquerque, and a staff of a half a dozen. Built from a collaboration between the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County, historical figures in the Albuquerque region like Harry E. Kinney, Pete Domenici, and Tom Hoover were involved at the very start of the organization. The COG now boasts more than 30 member agencies, from City of Rio Rancho to the Village of Willard, and from Albuquerque Public Schools, to the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority.

In 1969, MRCOG was run by just a handful of “participating” staff; by 1994, that number had grown to 23; and today, MRCOG boasts over 120 employees.

Along with our membership and staff, our programs have evolved as well. Where once our key programs in the very beginning were Monumentation Surveys and Aging, MRCOG’s focus has been expanded to include economic development planning, urban and rural transportation planning, and water

planning. We now have many programs of regional importance under our umbrella. Especially after 2002, the width and breath of our areas of expertise expanded to include Workforce Development, and implementing and managing a regional commuter rail system.

Anniversaries are opportunities to recollect milestones and memories—and to cherish them again. The credit for many of MRCOG’s achievements over the years goes to the visionary leadership of generations of board members and chairs, the cooperation and collaboration between our local government agencies, the administration of five executive directors, as well as the many (former and present) MRCOG employees who dedicated themselves to making this organization the well-respected professional institution that it is today.

MRCOG was founded on core human values like cooperation, trust, integrity, and teamwork between staff members and member agencies, and those basic tenants are still what govern our work culture and our relationships 50 years later.

As you flip through the pages of this year’s Annual Report, we hope you will get a picture of just how far we’ve come as an organization and as region. Starting with only a handful of people and a very limited amount of resources, MRCOG has traveled a long and evolutionary road.

So let’s look forward to another amazing 50 years with durable relationships, strong commitments, and the determination that will put the Council of Governments on track to reach even greater heights.

Here’s to the future of the region!

*Dewey V. Cave,*

MRCOG Executive Director

*Greggory Hull*

MRCOG Board Chair



## A lot can change in 50 years...

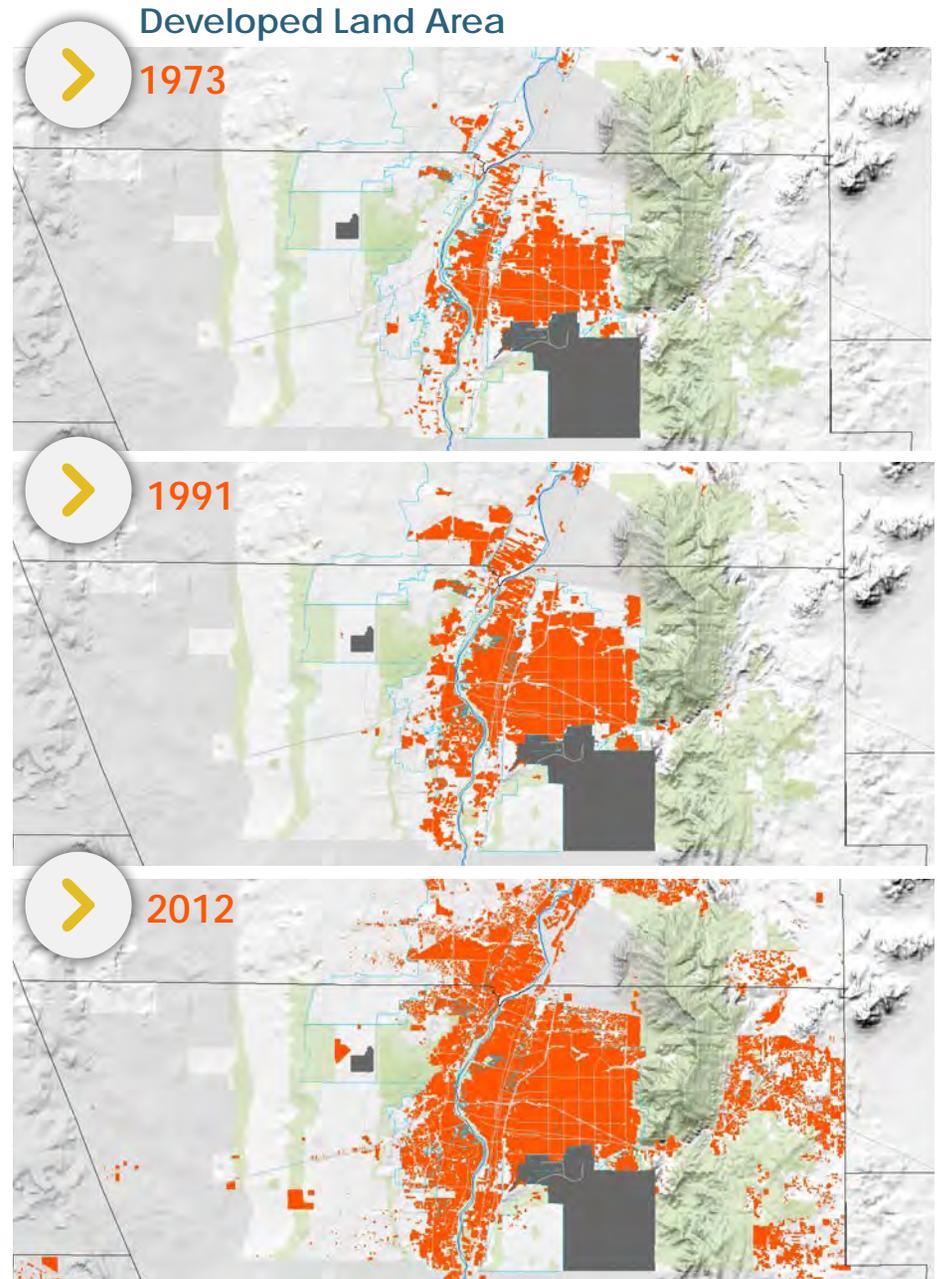
Not only has MRCOG grown from infancy into a large regional entity, the landscape and characteristics of our region have significantly morphed over time as well.

In 1969, the region's population was just over 358,000. In the five decades to follow we have essentially added another City of Albuquerque and today our population tops 926,000. Fifty years ago, the City of Rio Rancho did not yet exist, nor had Corrales, Edgewood, Tijeras, Bosque Farms, Peralta, or Rio Communities been incorporated. Valencia County back then included what are now Valencia and Cibola Counties. The county was split in two in the 1980s.

Back in 1969, the MRCOG region was home to 35 percent of all New Mexicans. This has grown to 44 percent today. Among places that were incorporated back in 1969, the Village of Los Lunas has seen the fastest growth, catapulting from just 973 people to 15,835 today! Within the City of Albuquerque, there was almost no developed land north of Montgomery Boulevard or west of Coors. Since 1969, the population living in Pueblos and on American Indian lands in the region has more than tripled.

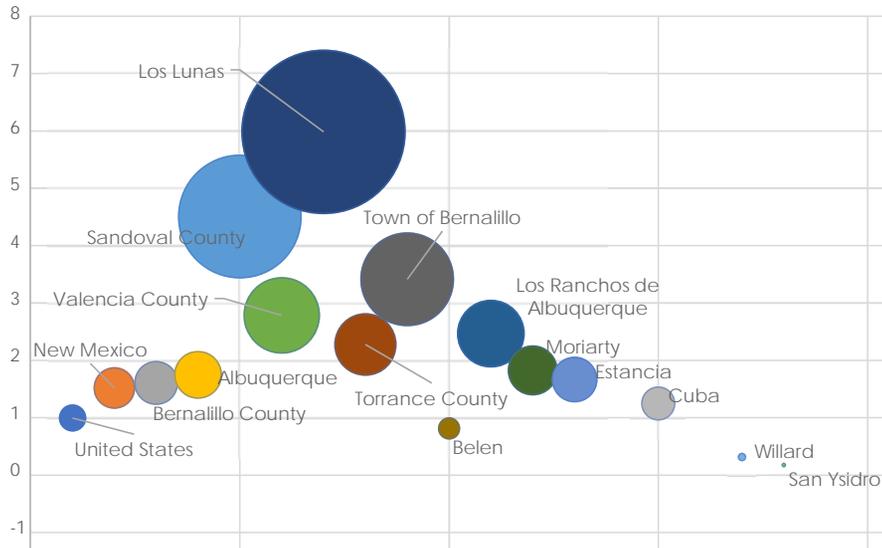
While the post-World War II baby boom era ended in 1964, the birth rate was still very high in 1969 by today's

Central and I-40 Heading to Tijeras  
Photo courtesy of Albuquerque Museum Historical Photo Archive



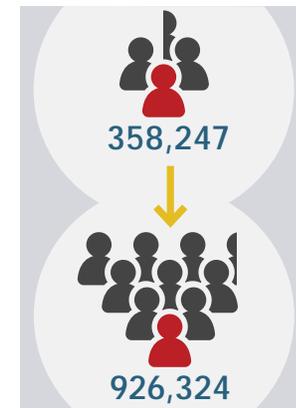
## Average Annual Growth Rate, Past 50 Years

US, NM, Counties and Places Incorporated in 1969



## Then & Now

### POPULATION



MRCOG Region, 1968 vs 2018

Wyoming Blvd. in 1969.  
Photo courtesy of Albuquerque Museum  
Historical Photo Archive

standards; 20.2 births per 1,000 people, compared with just 11.3 today. As such, households were much larger, with an average of 3.3 persons under one roof, compared with 2.6 today. We were also quite a bit younger back then, with 39 percent under the age of 18, now just 23 percent, and the share of persons over 65 has more than doubled. People were much less likely to pursue advanced degrees; only 30 percent sought education

beyond high school, compared with 64 percent today. Women were far less represented in the workplace, making up 37 percent of employed persons back then and 58 percent today. And as an additional fun fact, back in 1969 the mean family income was just about \$10,000 per year, and annual per capita income was \$2,614, compared with \$27,388 today (unadjusted for inflation)!

If we had a crystal ball back in 1969, we would have seen some exciting things on the horizon: the International Balloon Fiesta was about to arrive, we were about to recruit a minor league baseball team called the Albuquerque Dukes, Microsoft was about to be founded along Central Avenue, and Intel would announce a new location that would bring thousands of jobs to Sandoval County.

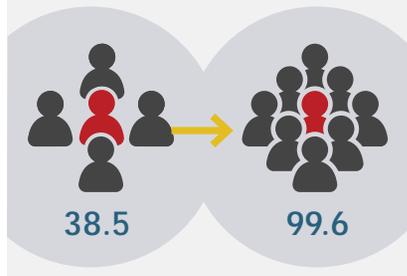
Today, as we sit on the precipice of a new economy based on disruption and technology, from commercial space flights to autonomous vehicles and smart cities, one can't help but wonder what the future will hold for our region... what emerging opportunities will we be looking back on in 2069?





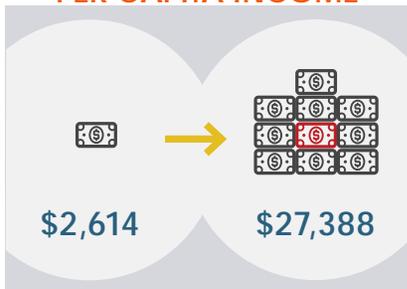
## Then & Now

### PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE



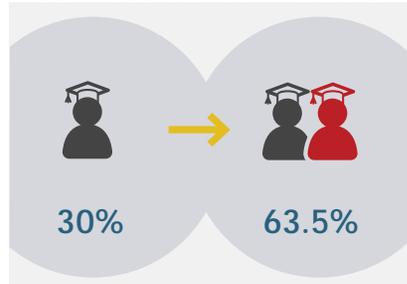
Metropolitan Statistical Area, 1968 vs 2018

### PER CAPITA INCOME



Metropolitan Statistical Area, 1970 vs 2017  
NOT ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION!

### EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL



Metropolitan Statistical Area, 1970 vs 2017

# Shaping the Future

Shape  
your future  
START HERE >

United States®  
Census  
2020

In the spring of 2020, each one of us will be asked to fill out a Census questionnaire. The 2020 Census determines, among many things, the level of federal assistance that we will receive for healthcare and education and the amount of funds we receive for much-needed transportation projects.

However, according to the Census Bureau, New Mexico ranks #1 among the "Hard-to-Count" populations by state.

Currently, 43 percent of the state's population live in Hard-to-Count neighborhoods. This puts us at risk of being under-counted, and thus missing out on Federal funds.

Our future depends on addressing this issue. It is crucial for communities to understand why the Census is so important. Volunteers are needed to serve on complete count committees and to assist *Census in the Schools* efforts.



## A look to the Future...

Let's take a look at some of the exciting things happening in our region. Some of the biggest catalysts for positive change on the near horizon are the **film and entertainment, and science and technology** sectors:

- **Netflix is creating a production hub** at Mesa del Sol with 1,000 jobs
- **NBCUniversal** announced the development of a production facility for film and TV, creating over 330 full-time jobs
- **Sony Pictures, Universal Television, CBS Television** and other major producers continue to hire **hundreds of workers in film crew and support.**
- **Sandia National Laboratories** will hire 1,900 employees
- **Intel** will add at least 300 jobs
- **Facebook** has tripled its original plans for a Los Lunas data center with 800 – 1100 construction workers through 2023 and up to 300 permanent positions. By mid-2018, the Village of Los Lunas saw a \$2 million increase in gross receipts tax revenue due to the Facebook project alone.



Facebook Campus in Los Lunas Aerial. Photo courtesy of Facebook

# MRCOG: an Economic Development District since 1975

For the last 44 years, MRCOG has been engaging with the local community to plan for economic growth and development; it has also been engaging with partners at the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to bring federal money to needed projects here at home.

In the last decade, MRCOG assisted in developing over twenty successful EDA projects, resulting in nearly \$13 million of federal funds matched by \$10 million of local and private funds. Each project involves numerous meetings with applicants to flesh out the project idea, make sure it meets EDA's funding criteria, fits into the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy\* (CEDS), and has all the necessary match.



## WESST

*a non-profit providing training, mentoring, and access to capital to entrepreneurs, particularly women, minorities and low-income clients.*

\$3,850,000 EDA Funds total. WESST leveraged the EDA funds and raised a total of \$10.5 million; 1,111 new jobs created



## Sandia Science & Tech. Park Development Corporation

*a non-profit that manages and develops the Sandia Science & Technology Park to attract technology-related industries to New Mexico.*

Total: \$2.7M EDA funds; \$89M public funds; \$295M private funds; 2059 new jobs.



## ACCION

*a non-profit providing loans, business connections, resources, and opportunities to local businesses. Accion was recently renamed DreamSpring.*

Total: \$2,020,000 EDA funds; 19,780 jobs created or sustained.



## Innovate ABO

*a public-private partnership created to develop a 7-acre innovation district in downtown Albuquerque to foster economic development and job creation in New Mexico.*

Total: \$2,498,048M EDA; \$4.85M state and local; \$4M private funds.

If the project looks promising, the MRCOG serves as a liaison with EDA staff, beginning with the EDA's New Mexico Economic Development Representative. MRCOG staff and EDA then assist the applicant with eligibility questions, budget development, ways to frame the request, and other

technical issues. The process can take 3-6 months. Over the last few years, the EDA has made key investments in the MRCOG region, which have had a tremendous impact on the economic development landscape. Some notable projects are highlighted above.

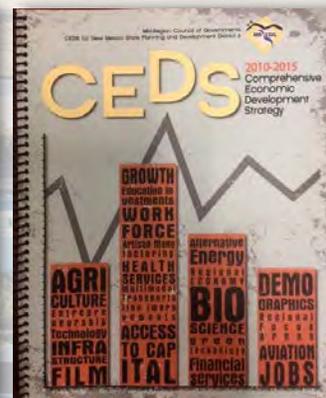
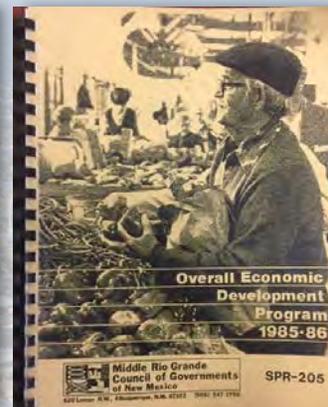
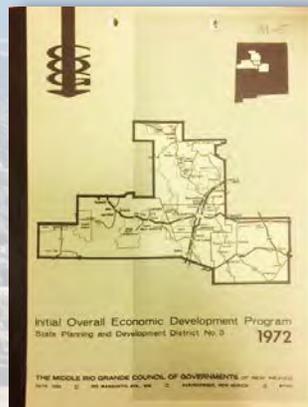


## \*Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)

MRCOG is designated by the EDA as an Economic Development District Organization. The region has had this designation since 1975, and receives funding from EDA to serve this function. As part of its grant agreement with EDA, the MRCOG is required to develop, update, and maintain a five-year economic development plan called the CEDs.

The CEDs serves as a blueprint for economic growth in the region and presents key focus areas and local capacities that can be leveraged for job creation and private investment. MRCOG develops the CEDs by engaging with public and private community leaders through a collaborative planning process that assures buy-in.

All EDA grant applicants are required to reference the local CEDs, allowing the EDA to measure the application for fit and competitiveness, and whether it advances the goals set by the community.



Sandia Science & Technology Part Aerial. Photo courtesy of Sandia Science & Technology Park

# Workforce Development in Central New Mexico



The Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) is the local Workforce Development Board for central New Mexico tasked with coordinating regional training efforts under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) to assure the availability of high-quality training opportunities to enable job seekers to obtain good jobs and to provide employers with a skilled and viable workforce.

In 2006, WCCNM started partnered with MRCOG to stabilize the Central Region's Workforce System and provide administrative, operations and fiscal management. Throughout this relationship, training funds have increased from \$3.8 million to over \$10 million in program year 2019. Workforce hosts regular job fairs, and offers and runs a plethora of programs designed to help people get trained and working through its many partners. Graduate ABQ and TechHire are examples.

## New Mexico Workforce Connection

*A Proud Partner of the American Job Center Network*



- > 84 NUMBER OF JOB FAIRS HOSTED
- > 526 NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS
- > 5,320 NUMBER OF JOB SEEKERS ATTENDING

# TechHire New Mexico

TechHire New Mexico is a four year, four million-dollar USDOL Employment and Training grant program designed to provide innovative Information Technology (IT) job training and placement for residents in the central region. It is about to complete its third year. The program offers paid IT occupational training opportunities for individuals ages 17-29 who experience barriers to training and employment. It also focuses on identifying and mitigating IT-related staffing challenges, and to develop and enhance a more effective IT talent pipeline for future growth.

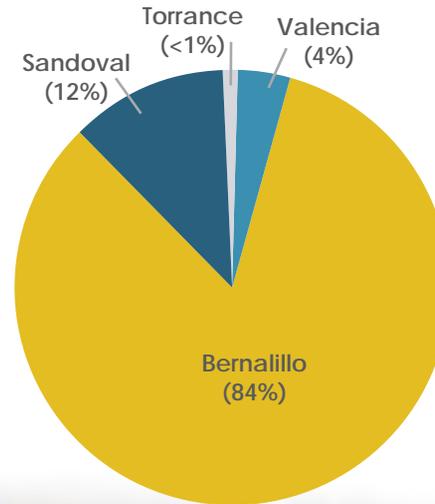
All TechHire New Mexico participants receive IT-related training leading to a nationally recognized certificate or credential and have benefited from the program's exceptional training partners: CNM, CNM Ingenuity (nationally recognized Tech/IT training bootcamps), UNM Continuing Education, UNM Valencia Campus, and New Horizons Computer Learning Center.

TechHire New Mexico has been very successful, with 276 participants, more than 300 successfully completed IT



trainings (some participants complete more than one training) and over 75 participants assisted with job placement, including subsidized paid internships and on-the-job training. The accelerated training provided through TechHire New Mexico allows participants to quickly earn the Tech/IT certifications they need to secure employment. Workforce data shows that the median number of days participants needed to complete one or more trainings is only 46 days.

TechHire Participants by County



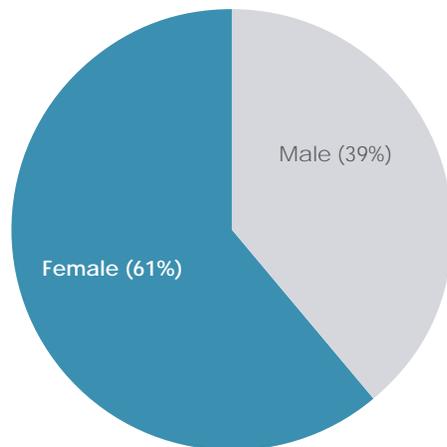
## Graduate! ABQ

Graduate! ABQ is a partnership that aims to increase the number of working-age adults in central New Mexico who enrol in and complete a post-secondary certification or degree. Working with local institutions, most notably CNM, Graduate! ABQ ensures a seamless transition for adults through a “warm hand-off.” This includes introducing adults to advisors, ensuring there is follow-up communication to encourage student retention, and working to eliminate barriers to education that adults may face, such as a lack of access to information and fear of the enrolment process.

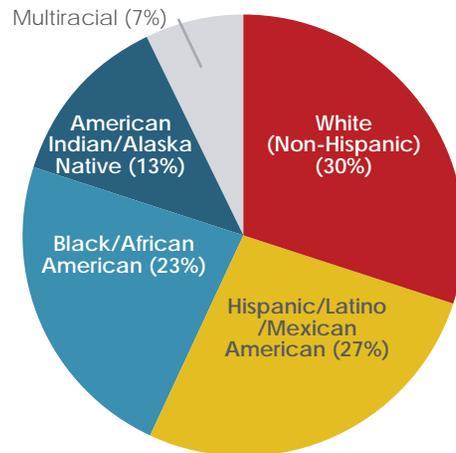
Graduate! ABQ focuses its efforts on:

- Hispanics/Latinos and Native Americans/American Indians
- Men between ages 18 and 24
- Recent high school equivalency or GED recipients
- Individuals who are incarcerated or re-entering society
- Individuals from low-income backgrounds
- Youth from the foster system or who are system-impacted

Clients by Gender

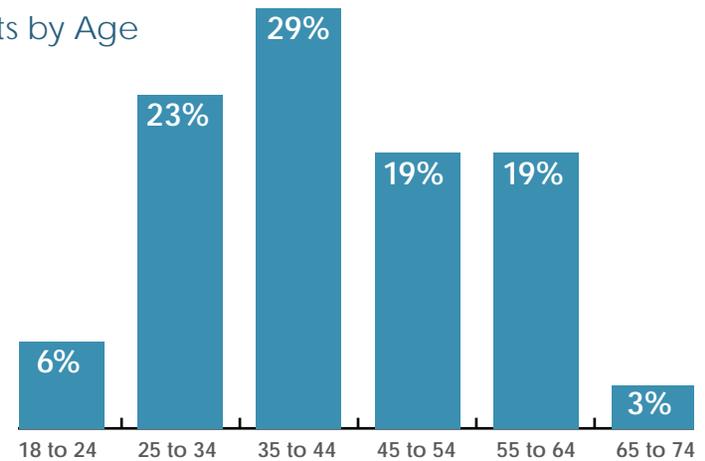


Clients by Race



To date, Graduate! ABQ has served over 350 clients, 97 of whom are currently enrolled at the following post-secondary education institutions: CNM, UNM, Western New Mexico University, Highlands University, Santa Fe Community College, SALT University, and Brookline College.

Clients by Age



Reason for Enrolling

- > 45% RETURNING TO START A DIFFERENT PROGRAM
- > 23% FIRST TIME ATTENDING
- > 23% RETURNING TO COMPLETE
- > 10% SOME OTHER REASON



## Success Stories

Our Workforce Connection programs are making a big difference in the lives of many. Here are a few examples.



Reginald

The WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker program provided a presentation to Sandia Office Supply, an Albuquerque-based office supply store, about the available services and funding for training. The company wanted to hire a certain candidate, Reginald, but he first needed to meet additional training requirements. Reginald had been on unemployment and had a difficult time finding a job. The WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker Program connected Sandia Office Supply with on-the-job training services, and Reginald is excited to now have the opportunity to work as an accountant with the company.



Ivan

"Prior to [...] TechHire NM, I was working as a supervisor at a local credit union. Although I enjoyed my time there, I felt that I was reaching a point where continued professional growth was no longer viable, especially without a degree. I had signed up for classes at CNM but was not sure which path to take. One day, I stumbled across Deep Dive Coding's website and for the first time in a long time I felt excited about pursuing a career. TechHire NM made it possible for me to attend, and now I am working at a local non-profit organization [...]. I am excited about my new career and encourage others to take the leap!"



Jackie

The Sandoval Academy of Bilingual Education (SABE) is the first Kindergarten through 8th grade dual-language charter school in the city of Rio Rancho. Jackie, Director/Principal, aims to offer a variety of services. The WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker Program is an integral part of this. Jackie has been able to hire one staff member, who, upon successful completion of the Youth Program, transitioned over to the Adult WIOA program and participated in on-the-job training. As the school grows, Jackie will continue to use the WIOA programs to hire new staff and train her current staff.



Gilbert

Gilbert likes to work with his hands, but had no idea he could go to school for that, until he stopped at the Workforce Connection Center to use the computers and ended up meeting a Graduate! ABQ coach. He got information about different types of education, received guidance on the steps to get into college, was able to find funding, and enrolled in the three-term Diesel Equipment Technology certificate program at CNM.

Gilbert received his certificate and now aspires to become a master mechanic. He'll start stacking credentials on his way to a higher degree, while continuing to receive guidance from Workforce Connection and financial assistance through the WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker program. In his own words, he's well on his way to "building a fatter paycheck," and becoming a business owner.



# Transportation Planning in the Metro Area – The Early Years

Contributors: Mr. Chris Blewett (former MRCOG Director of Planning), Mr. Steve Miller (former Bernalillo County Director of Infrastructure, Planning and GEO Resources), Mr. David Pennella (current MPO Administrator)

Planning for transportation improvements has been undertaken in Albuquerque at least as far back as the 1940's, MRCOG became the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in 1973. Although this was the beginning of developing long-range transportation plans, and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs), metropolitan transportation planning was undertaken with very different methods from those used today.

In 1985 the "planning process" was fairly subjective due to the absence of credible analytical tools and even basic data on the [then] existing system e.g. travel times, traffic counts, etc. Due to these conditions, decisions related to project priorities and funding were often more politically based and/or a reaction to new development (primarily on the westside). Solutions to issues

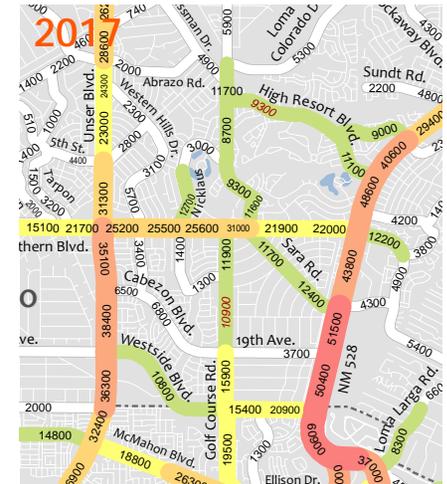
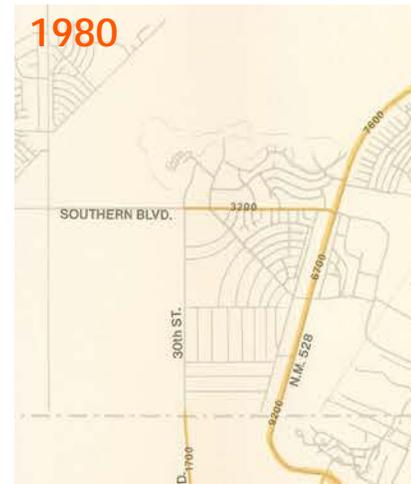
like congestion were all supply side based and consisted of adding lanes or building new roadways. The relationship between land use planning and transportation was tenuous at best. Population growth was allocated in areas where the roadway system was projected to grow and low and behold the travel modeling at the time then served to justify the development of the very roads that were used to allocate population growth. Since that time the whole planning industry has changed as have the tools, data and understanding of the interrelationships between project supply and resultant demand.

It was also a time with huge growth rates and a rapidly developing westside. Forecasts were being done for the environmental phases for new proposed river crossings at Paseo del Norte and Montano Road and

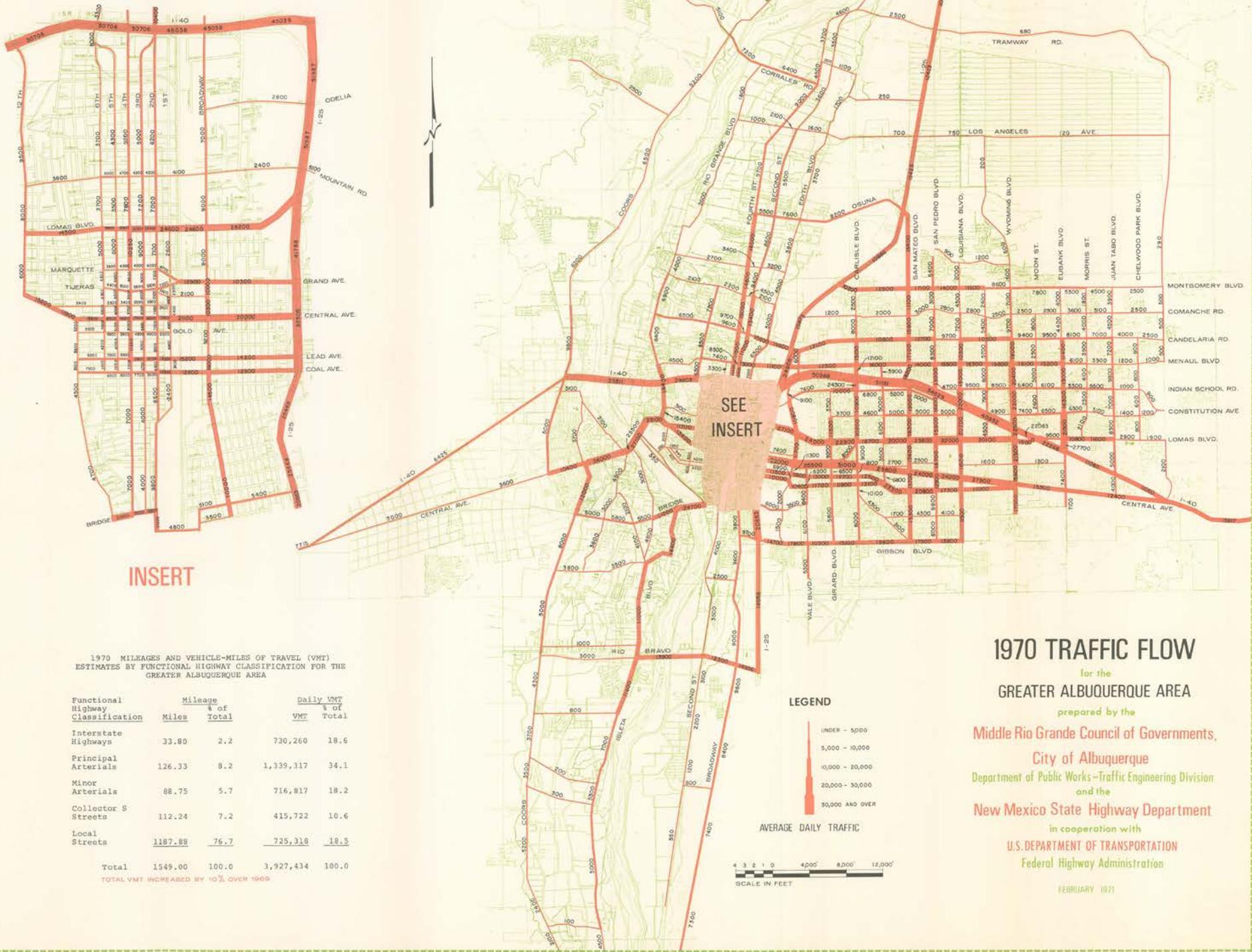
## Then & Now



The intersection of Coors Blvd./Corrales Rd. and Alameda Blvd/NM 528 in 1970.



Traffic volumes for the Rio Rancho area show the incredible amount of development this area has seen over the past decades.



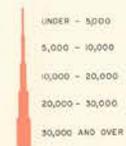
**INSERT**

1970 MILEAGES AND VEHICLE-MILES OF TRAVEL (VMT) ESTIMATES BY FUNCTIONAL HIGHWAY CLASSIFICATION FOR THE GREATER ALBUQUERQUE AREA

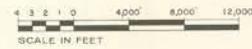
Functional Highway Classification	Mileage		Daily VMT	
	Miles	% of Total	VMT	% of Total
Interstate Highways	33.80	2.2	730,260	18.6
Principal Arterials	126.33	8.2	1,339,317	34.1
Minor Arterials	88.75	5.7	716,817	18.2
Collector & Streets	112.24	7.2	415,722	10.6
Local Streets	1187.88	76.7	725,318	18.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1549.00</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,927,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>

TOTAL VMT INCREASED BY 10% OVER 1965

**LEGEND**



AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC



**1970 TRAFFIC FLOW**

for the  
**GREATER ALBUQUERQUE AREA**

prepared by the  
**Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments,**  
**City of Albuquerque**  
 Department of Public Works - Traffic Engineering Division  
 and the  
**New Mexico State Highway Department**  
 in cooperation with  
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
**Federal Highway Administration**

FEBRUARY 1971

capacity expansion on Alameda Boulevard, Rio Bravo Boulevard and I-40. Expansion of the Interstates was on the front burner as well as the preliminary planning for the Big I reconstruction which finally occurred in the early 2000s. We began to use our federal resources to start the regional bikeway network thanks in a large part to Ms. Susan Kelly who was a planner at the City. The first trail to use federal funding was the Paseo del Bosque Trail.

Early TIPs were typewritten documents on ledger forms with proposed revisions hand-written or "xx'd-out & typed-in". Planning methods evolved throughout the 1990s and 2000s to include use of computers for traffic modeling and forecasting, land-use modeling, population allocation, and TIP management. Now there is a wide range of transportation data available that wasn't collected in the past and project selection relies heavily on objective and quantitative methodology that implement regional and national goals. Today, MRMPO is officially a division of MRCOG with a staff of 15 planners, analysts, modelers, and technicians.

# Then & Now

1969\*      now



The Big I



Central Ave. Downtown

\*Photos courtesy of Albuquerque Museum Historical Photo Archive



## Connections 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Development

MRMPO staff has been working intensively this past year on the update to the region's long-range transportation plan, which will go to the Metropolitan Transportation Board for adoption in April or May of 2020. This MTP update pays particular attention to the existing gaps in the transportation network so that we can develop better connections for all modes of transportation—hence the name, Connections 2040.

In order to identify gaps in our network, MRMPO has been reaching out to the public. During public and

agency kick-off meetings held in the fall of 2018, participants were invited to mark on physical maps, any gaps of which they were aware. In addition, this spring MRMPO launched a new, online interactive mapping tool that allows any member of the public to record that same information about problem areas in the transportation network. Staff will use data collected from these efforts to inform the plan, and problem areas will be shared with regional decision makers and agency staff in hopes that, over



**MRMPO**

Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

time, it will foster MTP and TIP projects that meet regional needs and help close network gaps.

MRMPO also developed and shared an online questionnaire to gauge people's views on transportation. It included questions about perceived barriers for different modes of travel, how well people are able to access places using different modes, and how respondents would allocate transportation funding, among others. The questionnaire was launched in summer of 2018 and closed in December of the same year, with 630 participants.

Since the allocation of federal transportation dollars is an important part of MRMPO's work—and should be tied to the goals of the MTP as much as is realistically possible—MRMPO has gathered feedback on how the public would like to see transportation dollars spent. The top three priorities among participants so far have

been: 1) pedestrian and bicycle improvements; 2) road maintenance and preservation; 3) transit. The final results will be compared to MRMPO's recent funding amounts for different types of projects.

This MTP go-around, staff has placed more emphasis on going to where

people are to get the word out about the MTP and to solicit feedback. In addition, MRMPO has been hosting a monthly meeting with agency staff from around the AMPA who are involved in public outreach activities. This has been helpful for discussing lessons learned and best practices for public engagement.



# Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan and Vision Zero

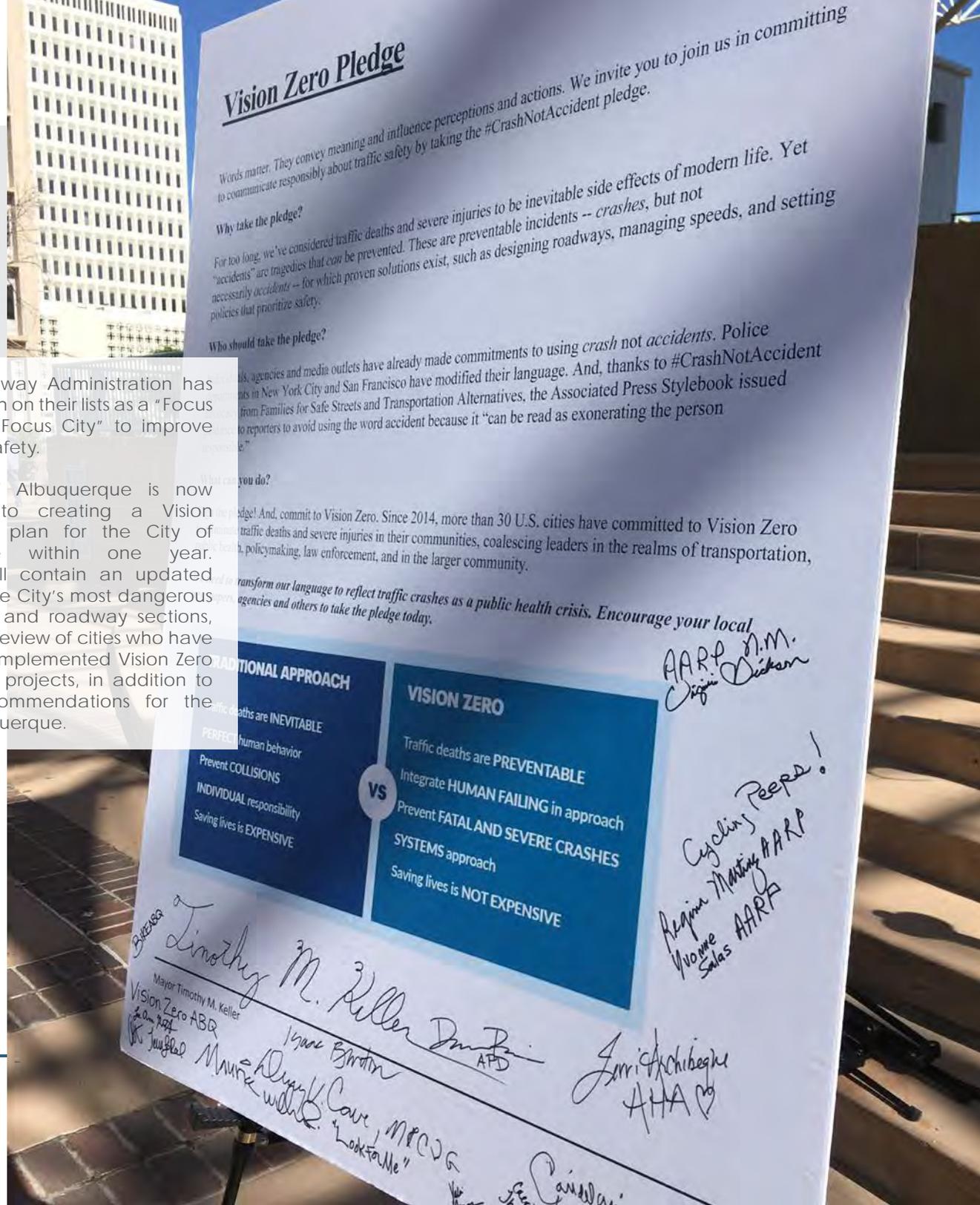
MRMPO completed the Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan, and the Metropolitan Transportation Board adopted it in August of 2018. The plan identifies a High Fatality and Injury Network (HFIN): locations where safety improvements are warranted. The plan also establishes Vision Zero, with its end-goal of ZERO traffic fatalities, as the vision for the region. During a recent signing ceremony, Mayor Keller adopted Vision Zero as the goal for the City. This is good news, as New Mexico and Albuquerque are listed at the top of states and cities experiencing the highest rates of pedestrian traffic fatalities. In fact, the

Federal Highway Administration has included both on their lists as a "Focus State" and "Focus City" to improve pedestrian safety.

The City of Albuquerque is now committed to creating a Vision Zero action plan for the City of Albuquerque within one year. This plan will contain an updated analysis of the City's most dangerous intersections and roadway sections, as well as a review of cities who have successfully implemented Vision Zero policies and projects, in addition to specific recommendations for the City of Albuquerque.



Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller signing the Vision Zero pledge for the City of Albuquerque



# MRCOG HISTORY TIMELINE

**1969**

- The very beginning of the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments
- Stephen George is appointed its first Executive Director



**1973**

MRGCOG is designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region and the Urban Transportation Planning Policy Board (now MTB) is formed

**1978**

- MRGCOG selected to prepare Urban Implementation Plan for transportation-related air quality improvements in the region.
- North Valley river crossing studies begin with citizen advisory groups

**1980**

UTPPB proposes two new North Valley river crossings: Montano and El Pueblo

**1994**

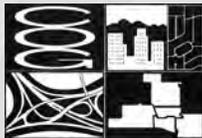
MRGCOG staff (23 total) with new Executive Director Dennis Foltz



Front row, left to right: Dave Abrams, Nathan P. Masek, Dennis R. Foltz, Ron Forte, Joseph A. Wendt. Second row: Marie Castillo, Carol S. Harlan, Shohreh Day, Loretta J. Humble, Stephanie K. Carrillo, Loretta M. Tollefson. Back row: Brian Pacheco, Janice Jensen, Jan Borchardt, Carol L. Foster, Linda L. Jackson, Vantrice Brown, Berry C. Ives, Angelina L. Lefebvre. Not Shown: Frederic Chavez, Donald N. Lange, Mary E. Martinez, Joseph J. Oliva III, Joseph L. Quintana, Carol Wander.

**1973**

- Albert Pierce appointed Executive Director
- MRGCOG gets a new logo



**1976**

Areawide Program on Aging established (Older Americans' Advisory Council)

**1975**

MRGCOG is officially designated an Economic Development District by EDA



**1986**

Urban Transportation Systems Planning Area expanded to include portions of Valencia and Sandoval Counties

**1985**

Traffic Counts Program placed under MRGCOG management

**1988**

- MRGCOG Executive Board takes on water planning
- MRGCOG gets a new logo

**1992**

- Regional Planning Organization (RPO) established for non-metro transportation planning
- Traffic Counting Program extended to cover entire 4-county region

**1990**

MRGCOG receives EPA funding to conduct Regional Water Quality Management planning process

**1995**

MRGCOG Board directs staff to begin development of Regional Land Use Plan with 50-year outlook, "Focus 2050"



**1998**

MRGCOG Board adopts Regional Vision Statement to guide Focus 2050 planning process

**1999**

MRCOG develops four Focus 2050 alternative land use scenarios



**2002**

- Lawrence Rael appointed Executive Director
- MRCOG becomes MRCOG and gets new logo



**2004**

Middle Rio Grande Water Plan completed

**2005**

Formation of Mid Region Transit District (now RMRTD)

**2010**

- Dewey V. Cave appointed Executive Director
- MRMPO develops Project Prioritization Process for including transportation projects in the TIP
- RMRTD takes over bus service in Valencia and Sandoval Counties



**2011**

RMRTD launches new branding



**2012**

Preferred alignment for new river crossing in Valencia County identified

**2015**

- MRMPO introduces scenario planning as part of MTP development
- Albuquerque gets its first bike share: BICI (now Pace)

**2016**

- MRCOG begins study of the region's transportation and logistics assets
- MRMPO starts providing online data in Story Maps



**1997**

Start of Regional Major Investment Study to look at various transportation strategies for the central Rio Grande Valley from Belen to Santa Fe.

**1996**

Rural Planning Organization Transportation Advisory Committee established

**2000**

Middle Rio Grande Water Resources Board formed

**2003**

- MRCOG charged with implementing commuter rail project for the region
- MRCOG selected as fiscal agent for Workforce Connection of Central NM
- Estancia Basin Regional Water Plan completed
- Transportation Accessibility Model implemented



**2008**

- First Local Food Festival and Field Day at Gutierrez Hubbel House
- Start of Kirtland AFB Joint Land Use Study
- NM Rail Runner Express starts service to Santa Fe



**2006**

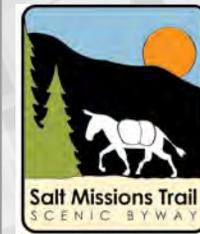
- Start of Rail Runner service between Bernalillo and Downtown Albuquerque
- Valencia County Mobility Plan adopted
- MRCOG staff: 54

**2014**

- RMRTD and ABQ Ride collaborate on planning for BRT system along Central Ave.
- MRMPO conducts Mid-Region travel survey—polling 5,000 residents

**2013**

Salt Missions Trail Scenic Byway Committee adopts new signage



## New Mexico Rail Runner Express a brief history

One of the biggest milestones of the 50-year history of the MRCOG was the re-emergence of commuter rail in Central New Mexico. The subject had been under discussion for about 30 years, when in 2003, the New Mexico legislature passed the Regional Transit District Act, authorizing the creation of multi-jurisdictional transit agencies.

The following year, the legislature gave regional transit districts the authority to levy up to a one-half cent gross receipts tax. Those two actions paved the way for the formation of the Mid-Region Transit

District and the development of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express.

In July 2006, Rail Runner service began between Albuquerque and the Town Bernalillo, expanding south to Belen in February 2007 and north to Santa Fe in December 2008. Today, the New Mexico Rail Runner Express is a fixture in our community. It remains the fastest start-up of a commuter rail system in the country, and has given New Mexico residents a safe, environmentally friendly, affordable alternative to driving their personal vehicles on congested roadways.



July 2006: Opening day for the New Mexico Rail Runner Express. Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez and NM Governor Bill Richardson were present.

### Then & Now

**1969\***

**2007**

\*Photo courtesy of Albuquerque Museum Historical Photo Archive

Rio Metro is maintaining a presence in the local community through its involvement in events of all kinds. Trax, the New Mexico Rail Runner Express mascot, turned 5 years old in May. The giant red roadrunner has attended hundreds of events throughout central New Mexico, promoting the use of public transit and rail safety. From appearances at Isotopes games and safety events to the popular "Read to Me" program, Trax has become a mainstay in the community.



## NM Rail Runner Express Station Openings



Another example of the Rail Runner's involvement in the community over the past year was our partnership with the National Senior Games. This summer brought more than 13,000 athletes (plus their family and friends) to Albuquerque for the 2019 National Senior Games. For the first time in the history of the Games, the torch bearer rode a train! 89-year-old Acoma Pueblo runner Esther Felipe ushered the torch into Downtown Albuquerque aboard the Rail Runner for the opening ceremonies. A free transit pass was given to each athlete and a companion. Overall, there were 1,514 Athlete & Companion Pass boardings, making it a very successful promotion.

2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2014 2017

## Rail Runner Lifetime Statistics

- > **12,280,341**  
TOTAL BOARDINGS
- > **520,128,911**  
TOTAL PASSENGER MILES TRAVELED/NUMBER OF MILES TAKEN OFF ROADS
- > **184,207**  
VETERANS LIFETIME FREE BOARDINGS (Program started in 2014)
- > **55,050**  
NUMBER OF SENIOR FREE WEDNESDAYS BOARDING (Program started in 2016 as seasonal—full calendar year in 2019)
- > **235**  
NUMBER OF GROUPS HOSTED ON THE RAIL RUNNER (Program started in 2014)



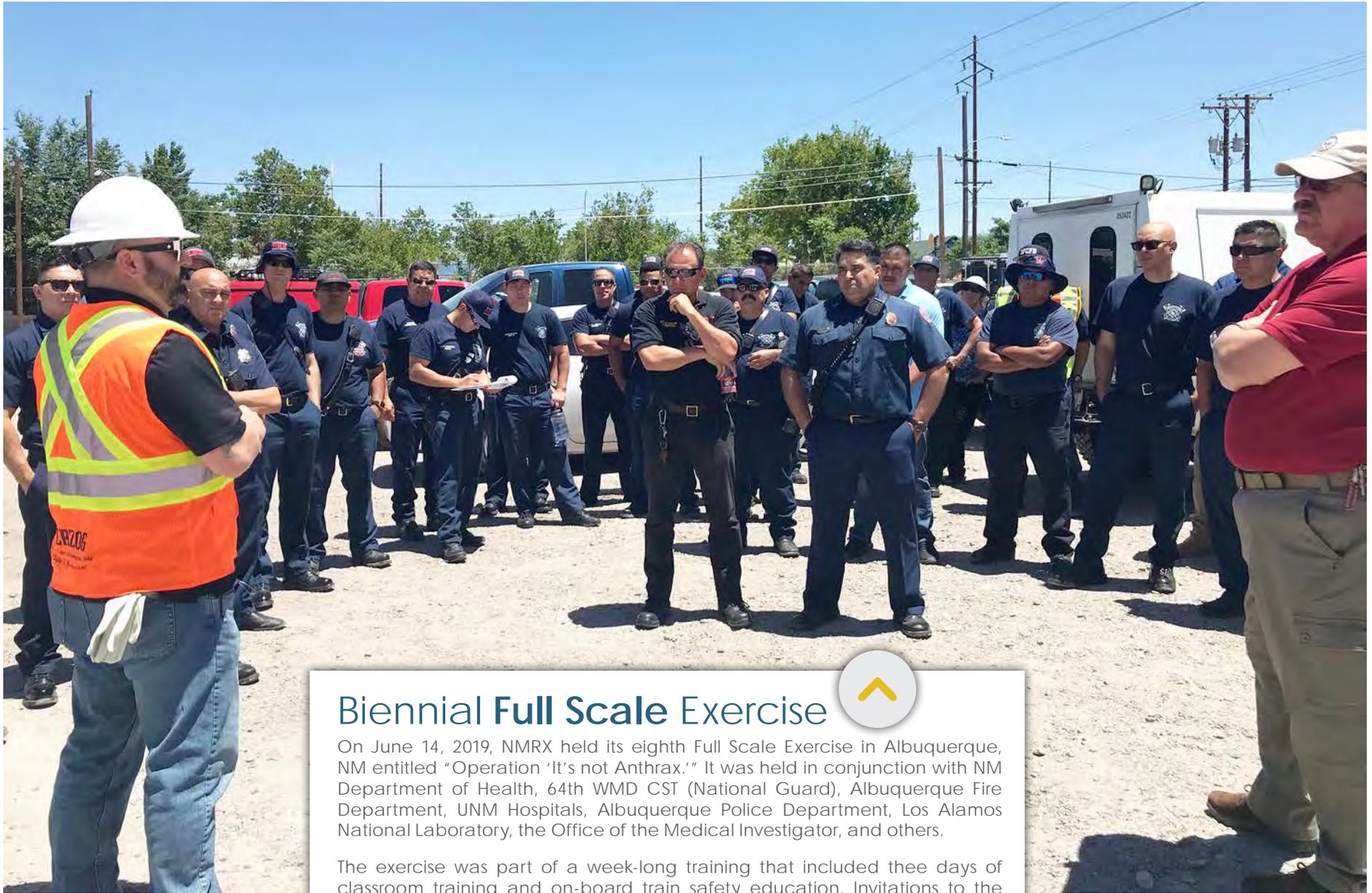
Top: Esther Felipe aboard the Rail Runner. Bottom: Trax surrounded by kids during a "Read to Me" event.

## Safety Improvements Downtown Bernalillo Rail Runner Station

The area near the Downtown Bernalillo Rail Runner train station is now a safer place to walk and ride bikes. Six months worth of work resulted in the construction of a pedestrian crossing, better street- and sidewalk-connections, and fencing to keep people from getting too close to the railroad tracks. The project, which cost approximately \$900,000 to construct, is the result of a combined effort of the Town of Bernalillo, Rio Metro, and the State of New Mexico.

Despite posted warning signs, the area had been a popular place for people to walk in the railroad right-of-way and cross the railroad tracks. The new improvements provide pedestrians and bicyclists clearly designated areas to cross the tracks, while discouraging trespassing.





## Biennial Full Scale Exercise



On June 14, 2019, NMRX held its eighth Full Scale Exercise in Albuquerque, NM entitled "Operation 'It's not Anthrax.'" It was held in conjunction with NM Department of Health, 64th WMD CST (National Guard), Albuquerque Fire Department, UNM Hospitals, Albuquerque Police Department, Los Alamos National Laboratory, the Office of the Medical Investigator, and others.

The exercise was part of a week-long training that included three days of classroom training and on-board train safety education. Invitations to the training, and the capacity to be observers/participants in the Exercises, were extended to emergency response agencies across New Mexico, in addition to those along the 100-mile corridor.

# Bicycling and Transit

Albuquerque has been ranked several times as one of the best places to bike in the United States, and was recently ranked in the list of Top 50 Bike-Friendly Cities by Bicycle.com.

In July 2006, the New Mexico Rail Runner Express installed bike racks on each car. Since then, there have been 426,598 bicycle boardings (through June 2019). There is no additional cost to board the train or Rio Metro buses with your bike. Bike racks are also available on most ABQ Ride buses.

## PACE

Rio Metro Regional Transit District's bike share program, Pace, celebrated its one-year birthday on April 19, 2019. In its first year, Pace bike share featured 43 stations and 250 bicycles and the program experienced 16,059 trips and over 6,000 riders. The average ride time was 21 minutes.

In spring 2019, Rio Metro announced the program would more than double in size throughout 2019 from 43 stations and 250 bicycles to 100 stations and 500 total bicycles. Through ridership data, community outreach and input, and bike share best practices, the Rio Metro and Pace team knew exactly where to add more stations to expand ridership reach within the community. Some new places that people can find bike share stations include the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Tingley Beach, Uptown, and the International District.



## Bike Riding Buddies

RMRTD has formed partnerships with several organizations that have annual bike events, a few of which are listed below.

**Bike to Work Day:** National and local event held each May to encourage bicycling to work.

**Santa Fe Bike Week:** Week-long event culminating in Bike to Work day.

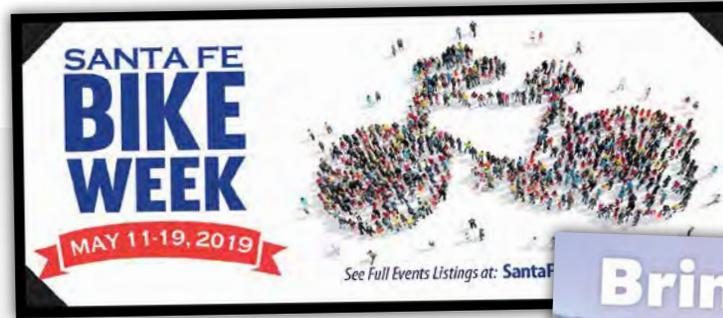
**Free Ride for Cyclists:** Free rides on the Rail Runner to those traveling with a bicycle on both weekends of Bike to Work week.

**New Mexico Law Enforcement (NMLE) Memorial Ride:** Cycling event that pays tribute to New Mexico law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty. Event includes a 64-mile ride from Albuquerque to Santa Fe, and a complementary ride back to Albuquerque on the Rail Runner.

**Day of the Tread Rail Runner Family Ride:** Halloween/Day of the Dead themed event held in October includes, among others, a Rail Runner 12-mile Family Ride. Families ride from Downtown Albuquerque to the Los Ranchos/Journal Center Station for a ride back on the Rail Runner.

> 426,598

NUMBER OF BICYCLE BOARDINGS BETWEEN 2006 AND 2019



Day Of The Tread Participants ready to board the Rail Runner with their bikes



Local



Mapping



Funding

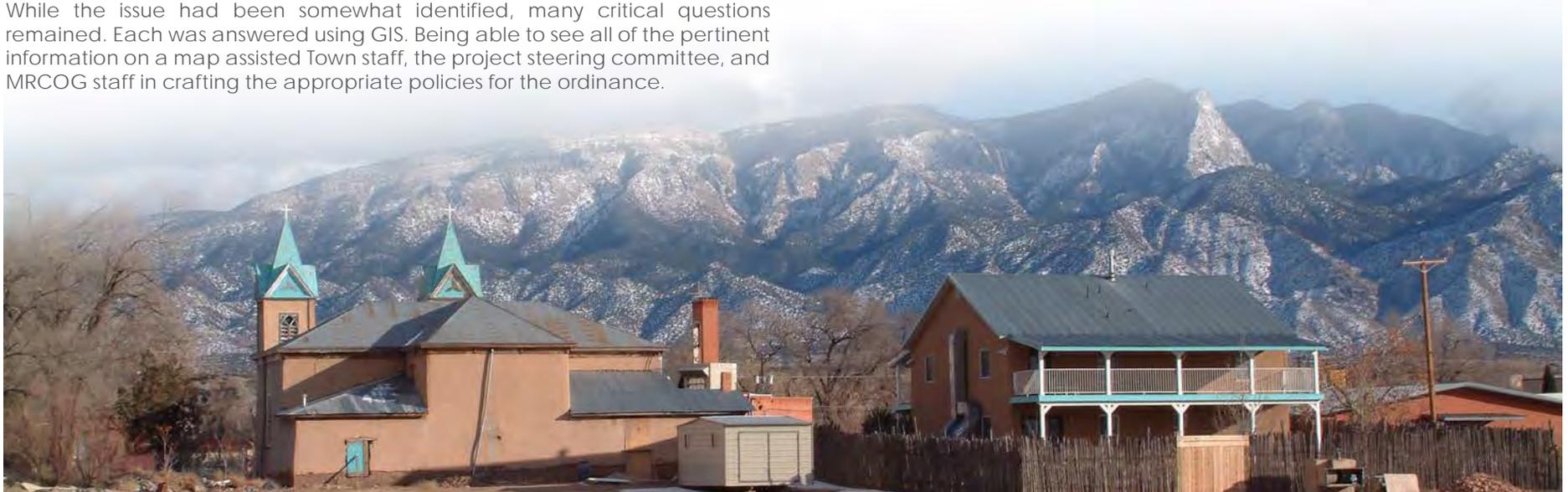
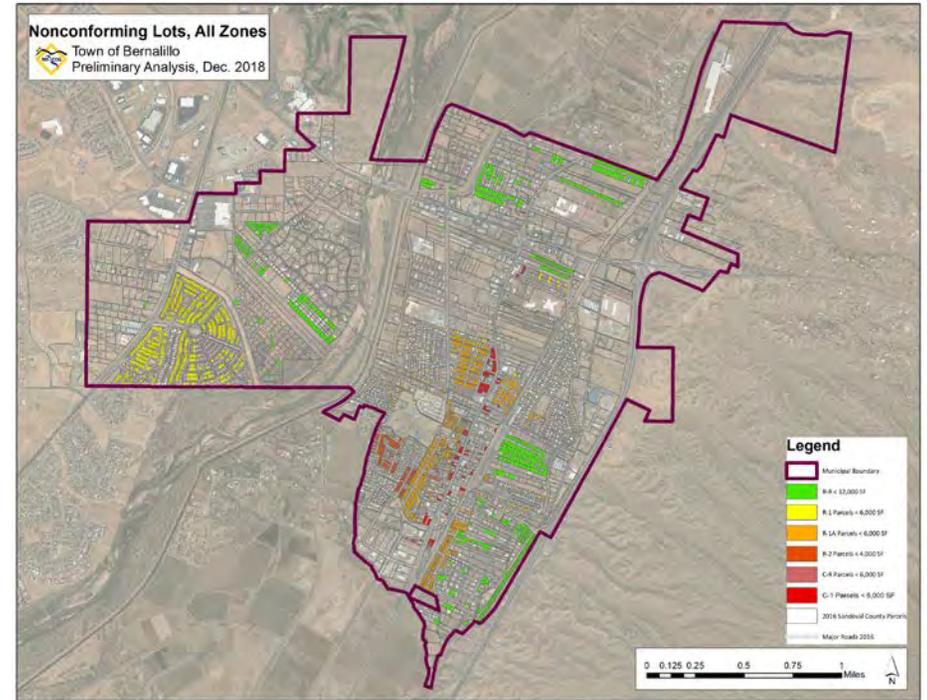
# Regional Planning Program & Local Planning Assistance

## There's a Map for That!

Over the years, the Local Planning Assistance program has prided itself on providing communities with data that solves problems and answers nagging questions. One of the best ways to analyze and communicate these findings is spatially, using the mapping software, GIS.

During MRCOG's work to update the Town of Bernalillo's zoning ordinance this year, it became clear that there are many legally nonconforming lots in the Town—land that were platted legally, but that are smaller than the current ordinance regulations require. When a parcel does not conform to a municipality's ordinances it can be challenging to get a mortgage, so the Town wanted to lessen this burden as much as possible, while maintaining regulations that ensure the health and safety of the community.

While the issue had been somewhat identified, many critical questions remained. Each was answered using GIS. Being able to see all of the pertinent information on a map assisted Town staff, the project steering committee, and MRCOG staff in crafting the appropriate policies for the ordinance.





## RTPO Funding Awards

The Mid-Region Rural Transportation Planning Organization was recently notified by NMDOT that our region was awarded three federal transportation grants. All three awarded projects were vetted through the Project Feasibility Form process managed by the RTPO.



### Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ)

The Pueblo of Jemez was awarded a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program grant to plan, design, and construct a multi-use pedestrian path along the NM Highway 4 corridor. The project, which will provide residents of the community 1.83 miles of safe pedestrian infrastructure, will be completed through two phases of construction. The Pueblo of Jemez was awarded \$4,696,561 in federal funds and has committed \$800,350 as part of the local match requirement resulting in a total project cost of \$5,496,912.



### Transportation Alternative Program

The Town of Edgewood was awarded a Transportation Alternative Program grant to plan, design, and obtain right-of-way as part of the larger Edgewood 7 multi-purpose trail project. The project will provide the Town with the necessary documentation needed to seek out additional funds for construction of the multi-purpose trail. The Town of Edgewood was awarded \$83,304 in federal funds and has committed \$14,196 as part of the local match requirement resulting in a total project cost of \$97,500.



### Recreational Trails Program

The Town of Edgewood was awarded a Recreational Trails Program grant to develop trails, construct a trailhead and parking area, and install perimeter fencing around publicly leased 248-acre BLM recreational parcel. The project will officially designate social trails for non-motorized use and will provide residents of the Town with a formal outdoor recreational space to engage in hiking, trail running, and equestrian activities. The Town of Edgewood was awarded \$84,543 in federal funds and has committed \$14,407 as part of the local match requirement resulting in a total project cost of \$98,950.

## MRCOG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vice-Chair

Commissioner Maggie Hart Stebbins  
Commissioner Julie Morgas Baca

### Sandoval County

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Commissioner David Heil

### Torrance County

County Manager Wayne Johnson

### Valencia County

David Saiz  
David Carlberg

### City of Albuquerque

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Councilor Isaac Benton  
Councilor Diane Gibson  
Councilor Don Harris  
Councilor Cynthia Borrego  
Councilor Ken Sanchez  
Councilor Klarissa Peña

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Mayor Jerah Cordova

### City of Moriarty

Mayor Ted Hart  
Councilor M. Steven Anaya

### City of Rio Rancho

Mayor Greggory D. Hull, Chair  
Councilor Jim Owen

### City of Rio Communities

Mayor Mark Gwinn

### Town of Bernalillo

Mayor Jack Torres

### Town of Edgewood

Mayor John Bassett

### Town of Estancia

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Mayor Wayne Ake

### Village of Corrales

Councilor Pat Clauser

### Village of Cuba

Vandora Casados, Clerk/Trustee

### Village of Los Lunas

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Erin Callahan

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Mayor Donald Lopez

### Village of Tijeras

Mayor Gloria Chavez

### Albuquerque Public Schools

Candelaria Patterson

### Village of Willard

Mayor Robert Chavez  
Emily Sanchez

### Los Lunas Public Schools

Ron Williams

### University of New Mexico

Connie Beimer

### CNM

Dr. Katharine W. Winograd

### Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo

Flood Control Authority  
Bruce Thomson

### Southern Sandoval County Arroyo

Flood Control Authority  
James Fahey



1969 Middle Rio Grande COG Board Vice-Chair Harry E. Kinney, MRGCOG Board Chair Ed Balcomb, and MRGCOG Board Member Milton Sanchez

MRCOG Board Member Wayne Johnson, MRCOG Executive Director Dewey V. Cave, and MRCOG Board Vice-Chair Debbie O'Malley during a recent meeting of the MRCOG Board.



**PICTURED ARE** (from left to right): MRCOG Board members Wayne Johnson, Katherine Bruch, Diane Gibson, Candelaria Patterson, Dewey V. Cave (MRCOG Executive Director), Gregory Hull (MRCOG Board Chair), Dave Carlberg, alternate Ron Brown, and board member Erin Callahan.

**NOT PICTURED ARE** MRCOG Board members Debbie O'Malley (MRCOG Board Vice-Chair), Maggie Hart Stebbins, Julie Morgas Baca, David Heil, David Saiz, Lawrence Rael, Isaac Benton, Don Harris, Cynthia Borrego, Ken Sanchez, Klarissa Peña, Jerah Cordova, Ted Hart, M. Steven Anaya, Jim Owen, Mark Gwinn, Jack Torres, John Bassett, Manuel Romero, Leon Otero, Wayne Ake, Pat Clauser, Vandora Casados, Charles Griego, Mary Homan, Donald Lopez, Gloria Chavez, Robert Chavez, Emily Sanchez, Ron Williams, Connie Beimer, Katharine Winograd, Bruce Thomson, and James Fahey.



### Rio Metro Board of Directors

**PICTURED ARE** (from left to right) Rio Metro Board alternates Tom Menicucci, Patrick Montoya, Kevin Lucero, Susan Vigil; board member Don Lopez; alternates Cherise Quezada, Richard Meadows, Joe Noriega, Elias Archuleta, Orlando Montoya, Rio Metro Board Chair Diane Gibson; and alternates Michael Jaramillo, Steven Tomita, Mark Gwinn, Amy Griffin, and Ida Fierro.

**NOT PICTURED ARE** Rio Metro Board members Klarissa Pena, Cynthia Borrego, Isaac Benton, Tim Keller, Jerah Cordova, Jack Torres, Debbie O'Malley, Maggie Hart-Stebbins, James Smith, RMRTD Board Vice-Chair Wayne Ake, board members David Dornberg, Charles Griego, Jim Owen, Charles Eaton, and David Heil.



### WCCNM Board

**PICTURED ARE** (from left to right) WCCNM board members Mannie Casias, Reyes Gonzales, Carol Culver, Leslie Sanchez, Richard Holcomb, John Mierzwa, Victoria Hernandez, Ralph Mims, Bob Walton, James Salas, Marni Goodrich, Hank Humiston, Melodie Saiz, Jerry Schalow (WCCNM Board Chair-Elect), Debbie Ortiz (WCCNM Board Chair), Waldy Salazar, Marvis Aragon, Celina Bussey, Raymond Trujillo, and Stacey Sacco.

**NOT PICTURED ARE** WCCNM board members Odes Armijo-Caster, Beth Barela, Herb Crosby, Michael Herrick, Mayor Gregory Hull, Krista Kelley, Doug Majweski, Vaadra Martinez, Laura Musselwhite, Diane Saya, Carolyn VanderGiesen, and Isaac Zamora.





## Metropolitan Transportation Board

**PICTURED ARE** Bottom row: MTB board members Diane Gibson, Candelaria Patterson, alternate Cherise Quezada, board members Debbie O'Malley, Donald Lopez, alternate Amy Griffin, MTB board member Isaac Benton. Next row: alternate Ida Fierro, member Dave Carlberg, MTB Chair Wayne Ake, member Robert Tyler, alternates Elias Archuleta, Joe Noriego, board member Michael Jaramillo. Top row: alternates Kevin Lucero, Steven Tomita, members Gaylord Siow, Ron Brown, alternates Tony Sylvester, Tom Menicucci, and Richard Meadows.

**NOT PICTURED ARE** MTB board members Cynthia Borrego, Brad Winter, Don Harris, Klarissa Pena, Mayor Tim Keller, Lawrence Rael, Jack Torres, Maggie Hart-Stebbins, James Aranda, Kenneth Murphy, Priscilla Benavidez, Jerah Cordova, Gregory Hull, Mike Padilla, Terry Doyle, David Heil, Andres Sanchez, and Kathy Trujillo.

## MRCOG Staff

**Yoshiro Akutagawa**, Facility Maintenance  
**Joe Aragon**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Lloyd Aragon**, WIOA Planner  
**Jim Armijo**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Michael Baca**, WIOA Computer Specialist  
**Wilfred "JR" Barela**, Facilities Maintenance  
**Kelly Benavidez**, Customer Service, NMRX  
**Sandra Bernard**, RTD Driver Rio Rancho  
**Peter Blewett**, Network/System Tech  
**Eduardo Borunda**, Transit Operator, Los Lunas  
**Gerald Bowe**, Transit Services Surveyor  
**James Breiterman**, Train Dispatcher  
**Grant Brodehl**, Special Projects Planner  
**Donald Brown**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Sheila ter Bruggen**, Communications Coordinator  
**Veronica Campbell**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Henry Campos**, Facilities Maintenance  
**Wendy Candelaria**, Human Resource Manager  
**Elizabeth Carter**, Transit Operations Mgr.  
**Dewey Cave**, Executive Director  
**Jane Chavez**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Mark Chavez**, Train Dispatcher  
**Martin Chavez**, Facilities Maintenance  
**Allyne Clarke**, Marketing Mgr.  
**Tara Cok**, Transportation Planner  
**Ross Cummings**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**James DeLaO**, Transit Operator, Los Lunas  
**Terrence Doyle**, Rio Metro RTD Director  
**Anthony Duran**, Information Systems Specialist  
**Danny Duran**, Facilities Maintenance Mgr.  
**Kirk Estrada**, Train Dispatcher  
**John Felix**, Transportation Planner  
**Ernie Fernandez**, Train Dispatcher  
**Keegan Fisher**, Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Joy Forehand**, One Stop Manager  
**Richard Frye**, Facilities Maintenance  
**Vangie Gabaldon**, Special Projects Planner  
**Sandra Gaiser**, Regional Planning Mgr.  
**Angela Galindo**, RTD Dispatcher  
**Kenneth Garcia**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Samuel Garcia**, Traffic Counter  
**Ted Gaudette**, Information Systems Officer  
**Deanna Gonzales**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Robert Gonzales**, Operations Mgr. NMRX  
**Esteban Gonzalez**, RTD Driver, Rio Rancho  
**Carmen Gutierrez**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Eric Gutierrez**, Senior Accountant  
**Michelle Harrison**, Program Support Coordinator, Los Lunas  
**Holly Healy**, Transit Operator, Rio Rancho  
**Carlos Hercules**, Transit Operator, Los Lunas  
**Kristin Hodgson**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Danny Holcomb**, Transit Manager, Los Lunas  
**Larry Horan**, Attorney  
**Brandon Howe**, RTPO Planner  
**Sarah Ijadi**, Transportation Planner  
**Daniel Jimenez**, Transportation Planner  
**Michael Jiron**, Graphic Designer  
**James Kolberg**, Transportation Planner  
**Denise Kurtz**, RTD Dispatcher, Los Lunas  
**Ariana Lueras**, WIOA Program Support Coordinator  
**Annette Madrid**, Transit Operator, Rio Rancho  
**David Maes**, Transit Mgr., Los Lunas  
**Sylvia Maestas**, Accountant  
**Lupe Maltos**, Customer Service, NMRX  
**John Mares**, Facilities Maintenance  
**Virginia Marquez**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas

**Paul Marrujo**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Arthur Martinez**, WIOA Administrator  
**Jocelyn Martinez**, Program Support Coordinator  
**Riann Martinez**, Marketing Specialist  
**Nathan Masek**, Transportation Planner  
**Carol Mathews**, RTD Dispatcher, Rio Rancho  
**Martha Mendoza**, Administrative Assistant  
**Augusta Meyers**, Communications Mgr.  
**Adrienne Molinar**, Accountant  
**Kim Monjaras**, Procurement Officer  
**Kendra Montanari**, Senior Socio-Economic Program Mgr.  
**John Montano**, Transit Operator, Los Lunas  
**Marla Montiel**, Special Projects Coordinator  
**Steven Montiel**, Transportation Planner  
**Dominic Montoya**, Special Projects Planner  
**Rex Moore**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Larry Moritomo**, Sales Mgr.  
**Marie Morra**, Marketing Specialist  
**Steve Moya**, Traffic Counter  
**Karen Mullins**, Transit Operator, Rio Rancho  
**Eric Murphy**, Customer Service, NMRX  
**Amy Myer**, Senior Finance Mgr., MRCOG  
**Hernan Navarrete**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Elizabeth Olson**, Train Dispatcher  
**Nicole Ortiz**, Program Support Coordinator, WIOA  
**Renee Padilla**, Accountant  
**Stephanie Paiz**, Program Support Coordinator, NMRX  
**Bill Panas**, Facilities Maintenance  
**Dave Pennella**, MPO Administrator  
**Nicole Perches**, Customer Service NMRX  
**Yvonne Perez**, RTD Dispatcher, Los Lunas

**Forest Replogle**, Transportation Planner  
**Jeanine Richards**, Administrative Assistant  
**Nicholas Rinaldi**, Tech Hire Career Development Specialist  
**Ashley Romero**, WIOA, Career Development Specialist  
**Lionel Romero**, RTD Driver, Los Lunas  
**Tawnya Rowland**, WIOA, TechHire Director  
**Maida Rubin**, Transportation Planner  
**Irma Ruiz**, Customer Service Mgr.  
**Alexander Sanchez**, Facility Maintenance  
**Lisa Sedillo**, Customer Service, NMRX  
**Carl Seif**, Transit Mgr., Rio Rancho  
**Sagert Sheets**, Transportation Planner  
**Ann Simon**, Economic Development Program Manager  
**William Simon**, Transportation Planner  
**Joel Steinhauser**, RTD Driver, Rio Rancho  
**Matthew Stone**, Operations Supervisor/Dispatcher  
**Julie Stuart**, WIOA, Career Development Specialist  
**Anthony Sylvester**, Special Projects Mgr.  
**Vera Taylor**, Transit Services Surveyor  
**Socorro Telles**, Transit Supervisor, Los Lunas  
**Barbara Thomas**, Office Manager  
**Winifred Tinney**, RTD Dispatcher, Rio Rancho  
**Jesse Turley**, Accounting Mgr., WCCNM  
**Conni Vigil**, Senior Finance Mgr. RTD  
**Josephine Vigil**, Accounting Mgr. RTD  
**Matthew Wylie**, Quality Assurances Coordinator





**Mid-Region Council of Governments**

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