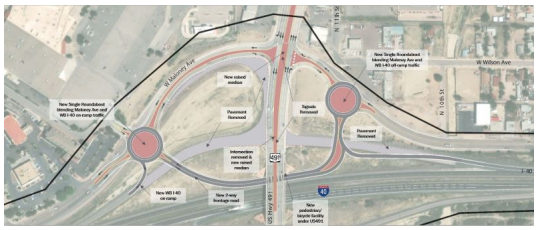
In 2019, the City of Gallup and the NMDOT developed a Gallup Area Transportation Safety Plan that identified the I-40/US 491 interchange as a high-priority area for safety and traffic mitigation measures. In the fall of 2020, NMDOT started a Phase IA/B Study to identify options to make the interchange area safer for all users and examine how the interchange can work better with the Maloney Avenue/US 491 intersection.




At the second public information meeting, which was attended by more engineers than area residents, Derek Meier, an NMDOT consultant with Wilson & Company advised that the team had selected the following three options.

1. Installing two, single-lane roundabouts which eliminates the two traffic lights,

1. Signal light coordination improvements to smooth the flow of traffic along U.S. Highway 491, and

1. To widen a small portion of U.S. Highway 491, extending a third southbound driving lane where Westbound I-40 traffic exits to US 491.

The purpose of these improvements is primarily to improve safety in the area where there have been a number of accidents due to the close proximity of the existing traffic signals and increased traffic flow.

Other issues addressed include improve roadway and drainage improvements, enhanced local and regional connectivity and interchange aesthetic improvements.

The design will also incorporate improvements that take into consideration safe passage for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

The plan was to eliminate at least one of the signals on the north side of the interchange, because the lights are so close together at Maloney and the eastbound onramp. Meier called it the main point of congestion and crashes in that area. He said the plan eliminated both signals there.

Electronic comments will be accepted until Aug. 4.

Meier estimated that the cost of the construction to improve the I-40/U.S. 491 interchange is would come to roughly $16 million in 2023 dollars

***For more information on the project background and previous presentations, please visit the NMDOT projects website:***
***https://dot.state.nm.us/content/nmdot/en/ProjectD6.html#6101390***

Mike Daly contributed to this story.