

Allison Road project breaks ground

Written by By Melinda Russell Correspondent
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A Ground-Breaking Ceremony was held in Gallup June 23 for the new Allison Road interchange project. Community leaders, business owners and concerned citizens were on hand to hear Gov. Susanna Martinez praise the legislature for working as a bi-partisan unit to pass the Capital Outlay Bill that awarded \$4.5 million in state funding toward this project.

Attendees heard Martinez, Mayor Jackie McKinney, and Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Department of Transportation Tom Church celebrate the successful allocation of \$4.5 million in state funding for the project.

“This creates a road to the future,” said Mayor Jackie McKinney. He praised Martinez’s commitment and integrity for following through with her support of the project. He also thanked the DOT for the Highway 491 four lane improvement project that will allow even more heavy traffic to flow from the north and through Gallup.

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Church said the improvements were not possible without the governor or local leadership.

“These two projects will produce long-term safety and traffic relief to the citizens of Gallup as well as make travel across the freeway move more freely,” he said.

Martinez said she believes people will see Gallup as an organized city with possibilities for successful business ventures.

“Capital outlay is about building it, completing it, making sure the money is there,” she said. “Road congestion slows down commerce.”

In her speech, the governor said the capital outlay funding for New Mexico is healthy. It has grown from nothing to almost \$50 million under Martinez’s leadership. The investments being made to infrastructure is helping New Mexico become more competitive in the economic world of industry recruitment.

Martinez’s philosophy regarding capital outlay is that it is meant for big projects. It lays the foundation for long-term, sustainable growth. But funds have to be leveraged responsibly.

She explained that in the past capital outlay has been appropriated for many projects that were not shovel ready. As a result, the projects were never completed, wasting tax payer dollars.

With capital outlay from the state, even small communities can leverage federal funds in an effort to complete big projects.

Martinez used San Juan County, Rio Rancho and Albuquerque as good examples municipalities that have collaborated with other agencies to leverage their funds and use them to leverage federal dollars.

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She also announced a \$100,000 grant appropriated to the El Morro Theatre from the Local Economic Development Act. It is the governor's hope that by investing in historic venues, businesses will be persuaded to open in the downtown areas across New Mexico.

"We want to revitalize our historic downtowns," she said.

During a regular City Council meeting, also held June 23, Public Works Director Stan Henderson updated the council and mayor on the next steps for the Allison Road project.

He said that he hopes to draft the funding in August and take it to construction in October.

There are many steps remaining to launch this project off the ground including certifying utilities, final project environmental plans, a 404 permit with the Army Corp. of Engineers and a final PS&E (plans, specifications and engineering) report.

With better access to the west side of Gallup, city leaders project the area will be more developed and property values will rise.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, Mayor McKinney said half jokingly that he hopes to see a Harley Davidson dealership crop up on that side of town as part of the expected growth in the Allison Road corridor.