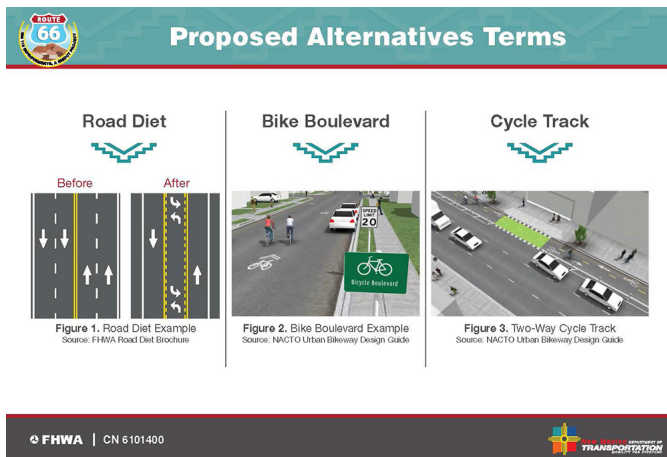


## For planners, Gallup's transportation future is now

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 24 February 2023 03:22

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New Mexico's Department of Transportation wants to know what the public thinks is wrong with traffic on Historic Highway 66, and what they think is the best way to fix it.

The agency is gathering information and public comments for its Route 66 Improved project, which aims to make the Mother Road safer and more attractive for travelers.

The study area is a 16-mile section of the highway that extends from Milepost 11 on the west to Milepost 27 at Rehoboth Drive on the east, and is divided into seven segments.

Right now the project is full of possibilities; it's in the study stage. It would be a few years before any of the improvements get made, but they could affect every aspect of the road from the number of lanes and median types to traffic speeds, turn and crossing opportunities, bike lanes, pedestrian amenities and parking.

That means whatever comes out of the process will affect pretty much every resident, business owner and visitor in Gallup, and now is the time to tell planners what the problems are and propose solutions.

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"We'd like to know if we've missed anything. For folks that are using it every day, there might be things," David Wilson, the consultant project manager, said at a recent city council meeting meeting.

Frequent users may have insights into issues that might not show up in traffic counts or other objective measures. Those could be as simple as problems crossing the street or a lack of parking or street lighting.

Users don't have to come up with all the ideas; the department has created a website that explains the options its study group has come up with. The website at [Route66Improved.com](http://Route66Improved.com) has interactive tools so citizens can see what different road configurations would look like and understand the reasoning for each option.

The first segment, from Milepost 11/Defiance Draw Road to Mentmore, is pretty straightforward. The plan generally is one lane of traffic in each direction with a shoulder; variations include adding a multi-use trail that may or may not be separated from highway lanes by a ditch. It could also add shoulder space for emergency stops.

The range of options gets bigger through the city. Some would reduce traffic lanes or eliminate street parking through downtown. Some would limit traffic to turning right onto the highway from side streets, with U-turn lanes for those who need to go the other direction.

Some plans have painted medians and others have raised medians that could be used for landscaping. Some would have bike lanes striped off from motor traffic lanes, others would create a greater separation for bike and pedestrian traffic.

"Right now it's not an enticing environment for bicycles," Wilson said.

The project starting point was traffic studies. The team found that there were 838 accidents on the highway in the study area over four years and a dozen of those had fatalities. From there the study group looked at ways to make the road safer, but they are also taking into consideration state goals for tourism and beautification.

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NMDOT representatives held a sparsely attended Zoom meeting Feb. 9 to kick off its efforts to educate locals and get their comments, but citizens need not attend meetings to comment.

The Route66Improved.com website covers the same information and includes diagrams, interactive maps, an online comment form and information for those who prefer to comment by phone or snail mail.

The initial public comment period is open through March 10, and the comments will be included in the study report. Another session is planned for the summer, and the public will have opportunities to comment when the project goes into the design phase.

### **PARALLEL TRACK**

Meanwhile, the city is working on a related process with its Transportation Master Plan. That plan aims to look at all the ways people get around Gallup and plan for a future of walking, bicycling, driving, buses, train and air travel that all work together and support other regional development plans.

The city's consultants on that project, Bohannon Huston, will host a public meeting March 13 at 4:30 pm at the El Morro Events Center to present their findings and get community comments.

***Bohannon Huston also has an interactive map online so the public can comment on specific problems and areas. That map is at [https://bhi.mysocialpinpoint.com/gallup-transportation-master-plan/gallup-master-transportation-plan\\_interactivemap](https://bhi.mysocialpinpoint.com/gallup-transportation-master-plan/gallup-master-transportation-plan_interactivemap)***

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