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Summary: Road improvements top list

The McKinley County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved 46 projects at a special meeting Aug. 23 connected to the fiscal year 2018-2022 Infrastructure Capital Improvement.

Topping the ICIP list were improvements to roads, which have been a county priority for years, according to McKinley County Roads Superintendent Jeff Irving.

The list prioritizes big-ticket countywide infrastructure projects, and now goes to the state Department of Finance and Administration for further review.

Commissioner Genevieve Jackson did not attend the meeting and a request dealing with facilities management was temporarily put aside due to her absence. Brandon Howe, a regional planner with the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, told the panel that COG updated the plan.

The list totals about $94 million and contains several repeat projects from past ICIP lists, particularly regarding road improvements.

"I think the roads issues are important to everyone," Irving said. "Yes, there are roads in the county that need improvement. That's part of what this list is about."

The top-three projects on the list deal with road improvements.

MANUELITO CANYON BRIDGE

"A bypass was built in 2013, but the main thing that needs to be replaced is the bridge," Irving said about the bridge.

The bridge was constructed during the Korean Conflict days more than a century ago and needs to be replaced.

The cost of the project, as listed on the ICIP list is $4 million.

COUNTY ROAD 19

CR 19 runs north from Prewitt to New Mexico 509. Irving said the road is paved in spurts, with gravel and dirt sections, too.

The El Segundo Coal Mine and a Bureau of Indian Affairs school both lie along it.

"The road takes on an added importance in that it impacts economic development," Irving said.

DEER SPRINGS ROAD

Dear Springs Road connects Mexican Springs to Twin Lakes in the eastern section of the Navajo Nation. Irving said the road is a regional route that connects two chapter houses. It's also a school-bus route.

Manuelito, CR 19, and Deer Springs are at the top of the list because McKinley County is close to having right-of-way rights on those projects.

"Is there an issue with the road needing to be realigned?" Commissioner Carol Bowman-Muskett asked Irving on improvements to County Road 1.

Irving said realignment wasn't necessary, but he'd look into that aspect of improvement.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Darrell Jimson, director of facilities management with McKinley County, distributed a separate list of projects totaling $113,740. A $4.8-million sports center was put to the side in favor of improving courthouse security.

"These projects are things that have to be done at some point," Jimson said, noting that, overall, facility security can be a bit more fortified.

He said problems include injured civilians and judges' cars being broken into. Jimson recommended the installation of a $74,000 surveillance camera.

Commissioner Tony Tanner, whose term will be up at the beginning of the year, said this was the first time the Board of Commissioners was seeing the information Jimson presented.

"I think this is important, but we haven't seen this before," Tanner said. "I think we need a formal meeting on this. I appreciate that you've brought this to us."

Generally speaking, Jimson said he was requesting $100,000 in ICIP funds to install bulletproof and shatterproof tint at the offices of the county clerks, treasurers, and assessors. He mentioned swipe cards for access to county buildings, and bulletproof tint for ground-floor county offices.

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