

New Mexico 2035
Local Perspective

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Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen, My Name is Michael Riordan, and I am the Director of the Department of Municipal Development for the City of Albuquerque. I want to thank the Organizing Committee and the Advisory Committee for asking me to participate in the UNM's Department of Civil Engineering 49th Paving and Transportation Conference. Doctor Brogan was a tremendous organizer of this event and I want to thank him for never asking me to do this.

In lieu of being in New Orleans tonight for the National Championship Game I am here and was at the kickoff to the bowl season that started right here in New Mexico with the New Mexico Bowl between the Wyoming Cowboys and Temple Owls. By the way, did you know there are only two seasons here in Albuquerque? Football and Construction.

One of the things I think of when I think of Albuquerque is the area code. 5-0-5 was one of the original area codes that came into existence in 1947, and until a few years ago, it was the area code for the entire state. So this morning, I'll be talking about the 5-0-5 when it comes to Albuquerque's local perspective of our growing transportation system in the next 25 years. The first five things I'm going to mention are major projects completed in the last several years as a look back from where we were. This morning, the 'O' stands for Opportunity. What opportunities do we have, not only as, an industry but as a community for the

future. And finally, I'll wrap up with five exciting projects happening in Albuquerque in the distant and not so distant future that we expect will still be in operation in 2035.

The interchange of I-25 and I-40, known as the Big I was first completed in 1966 as part of the massive federal interstate roadway system. It was reconstructed between 2000 and 2002. This is when I was first labeled 'Jennifer Riordan's Husband.' According to the American Highway User Alliance, hours of annual delay dropped from 16 million in 1997 to 1.1 million in 2002 as a result of the reconstruction. Why was reconstruction needed? In 1960, six years before the interchange was opened, Albuquerque's population was two-hundred-thousand. By 2000, the population more than doubled to four-hundred-fifty-thousand. So it took 40 years for the city to gain 250-thousand people. In the last ten years, the city grew by another 100-thousand people. By 2035, there is expected to be more than one million people in metropolitan area, with more than half of them living west of the Rio Grande.

Four years after the completion of the Big I Interchange, the City and State of New Mexico got together, and came up with 10 million dollars in funding to landscape the nearly 70 acres in the interchange. Our Interstate landscaping program incorporates the best xeric design principles and is a model for residents of Albuquerque and the rest of New Mexico on how to create water-wise landscapes. Since then, projects from the Native American Style pots on I-40 at Juan Tabo and at Carlisle, Coors and I-40, to the LED lights on the decking of the Big I the city has landscaped more than 116 acres of interstate medians. In

2004 the City began landscaping the medians on our arterial streets. To create a uniform process without having to re-invent the wheel for every median, the Prototype Median Landscape program was created. Staff holds public meetings with the adjacent neighborhoods and encourages citizens to give input on the design and they get to select a palette of trees, shrubs and ground vegetation. The objective in the long term is to landscape every unlandscaped median in the City. So far we've landscaped nearly 61 miles of arterial medians. For both medians and interstate the City has planted nearly six-thousand trees. Aside from the aesthetics, which help to make our City livable and marketable, the most important thing we are doing is putting a green canopy over the hottest parts of Albuquerque. It may seem counter-intuitive, but all these trees will cool the roadways beneath and ultimately result in less water use. That reminds me of a story... A woman was walking through her new house with the contractor. As they walked through rooms, she told him what color she wanted him to paint each room. In the bedroom she said, "I think this would be nice in a cream." The contractor stuck his head out of the window and yelled, "GREEN SIDE UP!" This perplexed the woman, but they moved to the living room and she said, "I would love rose in this area." Again the contractor strolled over to the window and yelled, "GREEN SIDE UP!" The woman was still confused but did not say anything. As they walked into the kitchen she proudly announced that she "wanted to eat breakfast in a nice bright yellow." Once again, the contractor went to the window and yelled, "GREEN SIDE UP!" Finally she couldn't take it anymore... "Why are you shouting green side up from every window of this

house?" He replied, "I'm sorry. I have a crew of NMSU Golf Management students laying sod in your front yard."

.As all of you know or remember, one of the most contentious public works projects arguably in the history of New Mexico was the Montano Boulevard Bridge. More than 40 years in the making, this critical river crossing was finally completed in 1997 and expanded to four lanes in 2006. This was done with public meetings about the size of this group, but not nearly as quiet. As the Albuquerque Metropolitan area grows, we need to continue to push our policy makers to encourage additional work corridors on the west side of the river, as well as live-work-play areas such as Volcano Heights and Mesa del Sol, since another vehicle river crossing isn't very likely in the next 40 years, trips across the Rio Grande need to be as efficient as possible.

However.

While it may have taken 40 years to get a vehicle bridge built over the Rio Grande, it only took 17 years to get a pedestrian/bike bridge built!...The City Council adopted a pedestrian bridge in the Trails and Bikeways Facility Plan in 1993, and with the help of the Federal Government, the State DOT, the Mid Rio Grande Conservancy District, and the County, The Gail Ryba Memorial Bridge was completed August of 2010. This five point six million dollar project is a critical link in our bike and trail system connecting both sides of the river without any conflict with vehicles. We received such good prices from the contractor, we were able to leverage the remaining ARRA funds to rehabilitate the entire 11-mile Bosque Trail from Alameda to Bridge boulevard. Improving the trail system

including adding grade separated notches along the North Diversion Trail at Menaul, Candelaria, Comanche, Paseo Del Norte, Osuna and Alameda improves safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, and continues to reduce the challenges of navigating around the City.

A major challenge for both bicyclists and vehicles was getting to Mesa del Sol. With the cooperation of the Federal Government, State DOT, Bernalillo County, and UNM the City built University Boulevard from Rio Bravo to the Journal Center... I'm sorry, I mean "The Hard Rock Casino Albuquerque presents The Pavillions." That just rolls of the tongue, doesn't it?

This \$25 Million dollar two lane road was built with landscaping and artwork, multipurpose trails and room for future mass transit.project allowed international businesses to start creating jobs in the area. Fidelity, ABQ Studios, and Schott Solar just to name a few.

That brings us to the OH in the 5-0-5.

Opportunity.

While I touched on a couple of the highlights over the last 20 years I'm more excited for the future of Albuquerque. We know people are not going to stop moving to the region. We know we're going to contine to grow, and we know as public officials, we have an opportunity to address this nearly constant growth expected over the next 20 years in a smart way. But we also know as a government can't do it alone. Without the private sector opening small business and larger corporations coming in adding job opportunities, the projected growth would just that. A projection. That's why Mayor Berry is leading the call for the

Legislature and the Governor to craft a more business friendly environment for New Mexico. Under the leadership of Mayor Berry, Albuquerque continues to work on bringing jobs like the new Lowes call center and Tempur-pedic expansion that were announced just last month.

Albuquerque continues to be rated very high according to Business Facilities magazine's annual rankings of metro areas' economic strengths? We're the second highest rated area in terms of both Economic Growth Potential and Alternative Energy Industrial Leaders? We're third for Motion Picture Industry Growth, and fifth highest ranked metro area for Quality of Life? And Relocate Magazine ranked the Albuquerque area among the top 10 recovery cities? Now granted, these magazines aren't flying off the shelves like "US" or People with the latest scandal on the Kardashians, but important people are taking notice of our area. And that means the people in this room need to continue to work to create opportunities for them to get from point A to point B in a safe efficient manner, whether it's walking, bike riding, mass transit, or driving.

A couple ways Albuquerque is addressing these opportunities is with our quarter cent transportation tax, and our decade plan in our General Obligation Bond Program.

With the current 10 year quarter cent program, the city of Albuquerque expects to improve approximately two thousand land miles of roadway while maintaining current high levels of pavement ratings, which have never been this good. This protects the current estimated value of the roadway system of one point seven billion dollars.

In addition, the city expects to construct approximately 70 miles of additional capacity to the roadway network and construct or rehabilitate 10 miles of trails and sidewalks a year.

Knowing the area is going to be growing over the next 25 years is a bit of a mixed blessing. Our decade plan is the main planning document for future capital projects across the City. This includes streets, storm drain, parks, public safety, and all other community services. When we work with other planning organizations, we're able to program future funding into the decade plan and stress the importance of these projects in the biennial general obligation bond program. The citizens of Albuquerque just passed the City's largest bond package at 167 million dollars. We probably won't see another package like that for some time. So that means while we know we need to address future concerns, as far as our general obligation bonding goes, we'll continue to have to piecemeal the larger planned projects. But the pie is only so large. We work very hard trying to leverage our local dollars with state and federal matches.

Let's see what BBER (Beeber) says about our employment opportunities in the next 25 years. No, not Justin Bieber, I'm talking about the Bureau of Business and Economic Research from the University of New Mexico.

They say –quote- “The long range employment projection shows that the Bernalillo/Sandoval/Valencia county region will gain over two hundred thousand net jobs by 2035 to total just over six hundred thirty thousand jobs. This is a fifty percent increase over 2008. The majority of new jobs, 58 percent, will be related to healthcare, education, and the professional, science and technical services.

Bernalillo County is projected to continue to attract the largest number of new jobs and will gain about 147,000 net jobs to total 508,000 in 2035.”

Currently, the top five employment centers in the area are all either north of I-40, or east of the Rio Grande, but by 2035, new and emerging employment centers are expected to experience the greatest job growth in the region; Mesa Del Sol Center being the largest with thirty-thousand jobs, Volcano Heights, Rio Rancho City Center, West I-40 and Double Eagle Two are also likely areas for employment opportunity and growth.

While that sounds exciting, most of those employment corridors are still without major infrastructure, which is why we program them in the decade plan, the City is also working closely with the Mid Region Council of Governments to address the needs so we don't get caught off guard like neighboring states did when their populations exploded, like Denver and Austin.

So where do we go from here over the next 20 years? How about we start with a reconstruction of the three worst signalized intersections in the State of New Mexico? Not the signals on Central between UNM and I-25 as Football Coach Mike Locksley was high-tailing it out of town... I'm talking the three intersections at Paseo Del Norte at I-25 and at Jefferson. 56 million vehicles pass through this every year. And a new reconstruction project kicks off my five future projects.

In 2007, Senator Bingaman provided 20 million dollars to develop design alternatives and purchase rights of way for the Paseo del Norte/I 25 interchange reconstruction project. The DOT developed numerous alternatives a purchased

some of the right of way. A locally preferred alternative was identified by DOT and MRCOG, however, it was determined the concept was not feasible to implement because of its high estimated construction cost. While mathematicians may figure out how to divide by zero before we see 350 million dollars to build the full build out of the interchange, the City, DOT and regional partners have developed a smaller-scaled project that addresses the major deficiencies of the interchange for a cost of 93 million dollars. The project will improve operations and reduce congestion through the Paseo I-25 interchanges and Paseo and Jefferson interchange. We'll do this by replacing two signals at the Paseo and I 25 frontage roads with an east to south free flow ramp and north to west flyover. At Jefferson and Paseo, we'll remove the signal by separating the grade creating east west through lanes. Again, I want to emphasize, MRCOG has identified these three signals as the most congested in the region. We'll also make I-25 mainline on and off ramp safety improvements.

So what transportation benefits will this project provide?

We estimate a 60 percent reduction in travel times delay.

Transportation infrastructure improvements on a recognized planned Bus Rapid Transit roadway;

Efficient connection of transportation infrastructure between residential growth areas and major employment centers;

Safety improvements to Paseo del Norte and I-25;

Congestion relief on parallel river crossings; and

Reduced congestion results in direct benefits to air quality.

Economic benefits are just as important. Based on regional model forecasting conducted by MRCOG, the project will add two point eight billion dollars in net new economic activity for the region;

It'll add more than three thousand net new jobs within the next 20 years;

The reduction in travel delays will save an estimated two point five million dollars in fuel; and

Support for a local area workforce of approximately 38-thousand current jobs, which is 20% of our workforce.

So how are we going to pay for it?

The City applied and was denied for Tiger three grant funding in December. However, we were not banking on the TIGER grant. We were one of 828 municipalities who had submitted 14 billion dollars worth of projects while the federal government only doled out 390 million dollars. Interesting fact: None of the four corner states received funding.

Mayor Berry remains committed to working with the state and other stakeholders to identify project funding. A recent City Council Resolution dedicates up to \$50 million to matching state funds for the project. The next legislative session starts in a week, and Mayor has already proposed his plan to the legislative finance committee. We're seeking 46 point five million dollars from the state with the city matching the funds for a 93 million dollar project.

Another roadway project the City will be working on for the next decade is Unser Boulevard. Today we are just days away from completing the last section from Paseo Del Norte to Paradise Boulevard. That will complete Unser from

Senator Dennis Chavez Boulevard in southern Bernalillo County through Sandoval County to state road 550 north of Rio Rancho. We are currently in design to widen Unser I-40 to Ouray and McMahon to Black Arroyo, and to add bike lanes, sidewalk and trail facilities from Dellyne to Montano.

Speaking of bikes and trails, we're also just days away from breaking ground on our newest bike facility. A bike bridge over I-25 that one of our local contractors will be starting this week. The construction is near two favorite contractor establishments so I assume they have received numerous requests to work on the project.

This four point six million dollar project will connect the Osuna Bike lanes to the trail on the Bear Arroyo over I-25. This is another critical bicycle pedestrian link to reduce conflicts of bicycle and pedestrian traffic on arterial roadways with vehicles. As the citizens become more multi-modal, we as a City have embraced it and are now designing projects with trails, wider sidewalks and bike lanes.

One of the largest projects with new bike lanes and wider sidewalks that will be complete this spring, but has taken 20 years to construct, or should I say 'deconstruct' is the Lead and Coal corridor improvement project.

This is the first project I can remember where we reduced traffic travel lanes. Originally, Lead and Coal from Broadway to Washington were three lanes in both directions. The neighborhood came to the City in the early 1990's and asked what can be done to make the area feel more like a neighborhood, and less like a speedway. A neighborhood advisory group was formed and they worked with Wilson and Company on ideas. Ultimately, they decided to keep the

roads one way, but reduce them by a lane and add permanent landscaping, wider sidewalks, and bike lanes.

Phase I, the restriping of the road was completed about three years ago. Then, in October of 2010, we began the construction.

This 26 million dollar project is adding a large diameter storm drainage pipe, and then landscaping and rebuilding the road. The challenges have been great, with utility coordination, neighborhood involvement, business involvement, media scrutiny, and dealing with the weather. Our contractor, AUI, has been doing a great job. I'm happy to say the work from I-25 to Washington will be complete late spring/early summer, and we're investigating funding sources to build I-25 to Broadway in the near future.

Just as we worked with many different groups on the Lead/Coal project, we are also working with different municipalities on making Albuquerque's transportation system smarter. I'm sure you're all familiar with the DOT's traffic center in the basement of the Council of Governments with all the traffic cameras and intelligent message boards... The City is also working on interconnecting our traffic signal systems and using our intelligent message boards. We thought since we're both working on very similar projects, why not partner with the state so we're all on the same page.

Right now, this regional traffic management center is still in concept phase, but I am very confident we'll be making an announcement in the near future about a location and construction plans. Ideally, this joint effort will include more than the City and NMDOT and be able to move traffic around accidents on

the interstate through city streets, or let drivers know about any local road closures before they get stuck in gridlock.

So as you can see, with the help our regional partners, Albuquerque has done great things in the past... The opportunity for future infrastructure and employment continues to present itself with many long term economic forecasts and we're either currently working on or planning on doing some great things in the future.

We need to realize that we have a strong local consultant and contractor community. In these economic times no one entity will carry the load to support that community. We must work together as a region and state to continue to develop the public infrastructure that is the core of our growing community.

I want to sincerely thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk a little bit about Albuquerque's role in the needs and issues for paving and transportation in New Mexico 2035, and I wish you all a prosperous and healthy 2012.