



Environmental Assessment

New Mexico Rail Runner: Montañó Station

Montañó Road
Albuquerque, NM
Project No. 423

Lead Agency



In cooperation with



April 2010

Project No. 423

Environmental Assessment

for a Proposed Rail Passenger Station and Parking Lot at Montañó Road.

Albuquerque, NM

The data and analyses presented herein were assembled and prepared by a team of professional engineers, planners, and environmental specialists working under the direction of Tony Sylvester, Mid-Region Council of Governments, and David Pennington, D. Pennington & Associates, Inc.

This document is submitted pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4334(2) and the Location Study Procedures of the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

Mid-Region Council of Governments and New Mexico Department of Transportation



Mid-Region Council of Governments

March 30, 2010

Date



NMDOT Environmental Program Manager

4/19/10

Date

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction..... 1
 1.1 Project Description 2
 1.2 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Project 2

CHAPTER 2 – PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

2.1 No-Action Alternative..... 7
 2.2 Build Alternative 7
 2.3 Access and Traffic Operations 11

CHAPTER 3 – EXISTING CONDITIONS AND PROJECT IMPACTS

3.1 Environmental Setting 14
 3.2 Neighborhoods, Communities, and Environmental Justice 15
 3.3 Land Use and Development..... 19
 3.4 Business and Economic Impacts 22
 3.5 Noise 24
 3.6 Air Quality 27
 3.7 Bicycle, Pedestrian and Transit Facilities..... 28
 3.8 Threatened and Endangered Species 30
 3.9 Waters of the United States and Jurisdictional Wetlands 33
 3.10 Floodplains 35
 3.11 Cultural Resources..... 36
 3.12 Hazardous Materials 37
 3.13 Visual Impacts 38
 3.14 Construction Impacts..... 39
 3.15 Cumulative Impacts..... 39
 3.16 Indirect Impacts 40
 3.17 Environmental Commitments 40
 3.18 Conclusion..... 41

CHAPTER 4 – AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Agency Coordination 42
 4.2 Public Involvement 43

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Project Area 3
 Figure 2: Rail Runner Stations within the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area 4
 Figure 3: Comparison of Travel Times with and without the Proposed Station..... 5
 Figure 4: Potential Market Population with and without the Proposed Station 6
 Figure 5: Shelter and Parking Lot Configuration at the El Pueblo Station..... 8
 Figure 5 Continued: Information Kiosk, Passenger Waiting Area, and Boarding Platform 8
 Figure 6: Build Alternative Option #1 10
 Figure 7: Build Alternative Option #2 10
 Figure 8: Build Alternative Option #3 11
 Figure 9: 2000 US Census Block Groups 16
 Figure 10: Neighborhood Associations and Community Facilities 18



Figure 11: Existing Land Use 21
Figure 12: Nearby Businesses 23
Figure 13: DASZ Employment Data 23
Figure 14: FTA Noise Thresholds 25
Figure 15: Bicycle Facilities 29
Figure 16: Bus Routes 31
Figure 17: Existing Vegetation (site overview looking east) 32
Figure 18: Surface Water 34
Figure 19: Floodplains 36

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: 2000 US Census Block Group Data 17
Table 2: FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria 25
Table 3: Carbon Monoxide Monitoring Data 27

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Agency Coordination Letters and Responses

APPENDIX 2

Public Meeting Notices

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This environmental assessment (EA) discusses the proposed construction and operation of a commuter rail station and park-and-ride lot near Montañó Road and 2nd Street in Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico. The proposed project is a cooperative effort involving the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) and the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and is part of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express — a commuter railway serving the Albuquerque and Santa Fe metropolitan areas in central and north-central New Mexico. The Rail Runner is owned by the NMDOT and is managed and operated by the Rio Metro Region Transit District through an agreement with the NMDOT.

The proposed project as described in this EA would be implemented and operated using state and local funds. At this time, the use of federal funds for project engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction is not anticipated, nor has a need been identified for any federal permits or approvals. Consequently, the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are not applicable to the proposed action. However, it is the practice of the NMDOT to prepare environmental documents for all state-funded projects and/or projects that require NMDOT approval. Environmental documents prepared by or for the NMDOT follow the requirements and procedures outlined in the *New Mexico Location Study Procedures*. The *Location Study Procedures* follows the same general process and procedures as required by NEPA including the assessment of alternatives, coordination activities with stakeholder agencies, and public involvement. In addition, the requirements of other federal and state resource agencies have been followed and addressed in the preparation of this document, including those of the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the New Mexico Environment Department, and the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division.

This EA provides the following information:

1. Information about the proposed project including: the purpose and need for the proposed station; the alternatives considered; the impacts of the project on the human and natural environment; the measures that will be taken to avoid, reduce, or mitigate project impacts; and a description of the process used for involving federal, state, and local agencies and the general public in the decision process. This information, together with public and agency comments, will be used by MRCOG/NMDOT in its decision to implement the proposed station and associated parking lot.
2. An assessment of the significance of the environmental impact of the proposed project to determine whether or not an environmental impact statement (EIS) is needed. If the analysis and public comments determine that an EIS is not warranted, then the project will be concluded with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

Preliminary engineering plans estimate the cost of construction of the proposed station and park-and-ride lot at approximately \$3.9 Million. This includes all costs of construction, equipment, taxes, and contingency. The source of funds to construct the proposed station have not yet been identified — potential funding sources are being pursued and could include state and/or federal funds. If federal funds are used, from either stimulus funds or other federal sources, authorization to use these funds would be require revisions to this environmental document. The revisions would include the identification of the federal lead agency and the re-issuing an EA/FONSI, most likely under the lead and authorization of either the Federal Highway Administration or the Federal Transit Administration, depending on the source of funds. In either situation, the EA would be based on the information included in this environmental assessment and modified to adhere to all of the procedures and requirements for the lead federal agency.

The proposed project was programmed in the FY 2008 – 2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area. The TIP allocated \$225,000 of State Capital Outlay funds for planning, design, and property acquisition for the proposed station with three project phases identified: preliminary engineering, design, and right-of-way acquisition. All of the funds programmed in the TIP were allocated for FY 2009.

1.1 Project Description

The proposed project is located within the City of Albuquerque at the existing Rail Runner tracks south of Montaña Road and east of 2nd Street (see Figure 1). Access to the site is via an existing curb cut and median break on Montaña Road. The proposed project includes the design and construction of a new commuter rail station and park-and-ride lot. The station platform and park-and-ride lot would be constructed on land currently owned by the NMDOT. The acquisition of a 1.8-acre parcel immediately west of the site is not proposed as part of this project but may be considered in the future if the need to expand the parking area is necessary. This parcel would be acquired to facilitate site access and site circulation. It would also allow future expansion of the parking area, if needed. A detailed description of the project is provided in Section 2.

1.2 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Project

The purpose of the proposed rail station is to improve access to the NM Rail Runner service. Eleven stations are currently available for train patrons over the 90-mile service route between Belen and Santa Fe. These include four stations within the Albuquerque urban area, three stations serving the communities south of Albuquerque, two stations in the Town of Bernalillo north of Albuquerque, and three stations in the Santa Fe metropolitan area. Two additional stations are under construction and are expected to be open for service in 2010. These include a station serving the Pueblo of Sandia and a station serving the Pueblo of Santo Domingo.

Currently, the area within Albuquerque north of Downtown is served by a single station at El Pueblo Road in the North Valley (See Figure 2). This station serves the portion of the metropolitan area generally between I-40 on the south and the Bernalillo County/Sandoval County boundary on the north — an area with a population of approximately 349,000. Because of the limited number of river crossings in the North Valley, access to the El Pueblo Station is not efficient for its overall service area. Moreover, many of the routes that provide access to the station — e.g., Coors Boulevard, Paseo del Norte, and I-25 — are some of the most congested roadways in the city. In addition, the parking lot at this station is narrow and elongated due to its location between Paseo del Norte and El Pueblo Road. This configuration limits the number of parking spaces that can be provided within a reasonable walking distance. The parking area at this station was expanded in 2009; however, it still operates near capacity and has little opportunity for future expansions without the using a multi-level parking structure. The combination of accessibility constraints and limited parking capacity hinders the use of the El Pueblo Station (see photograph on page 5).

The proposed Montaña Station is intended to improve access for the area currently served by the El Pueblo Station. According to an analysis conducted by the MRCOG, approximately 275,000 people reside within a 20-minute travel time to the Montaña Station site (see Figure 3). While this market area overlaps with the markets for the Downtown and El Pueblo Stations, access to the Rail Runner would be improved by the proposed station.

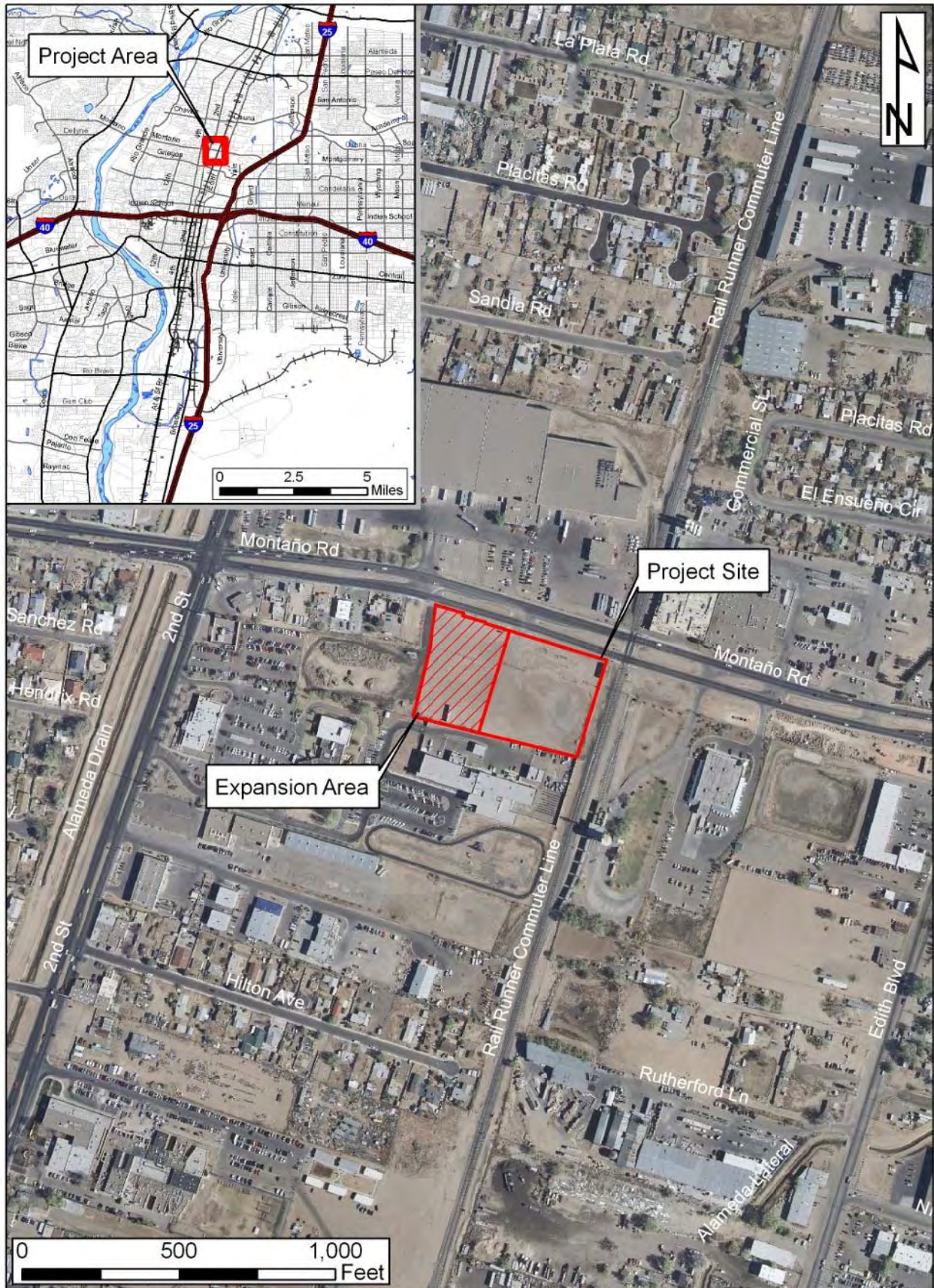


Figure 1: Project Area

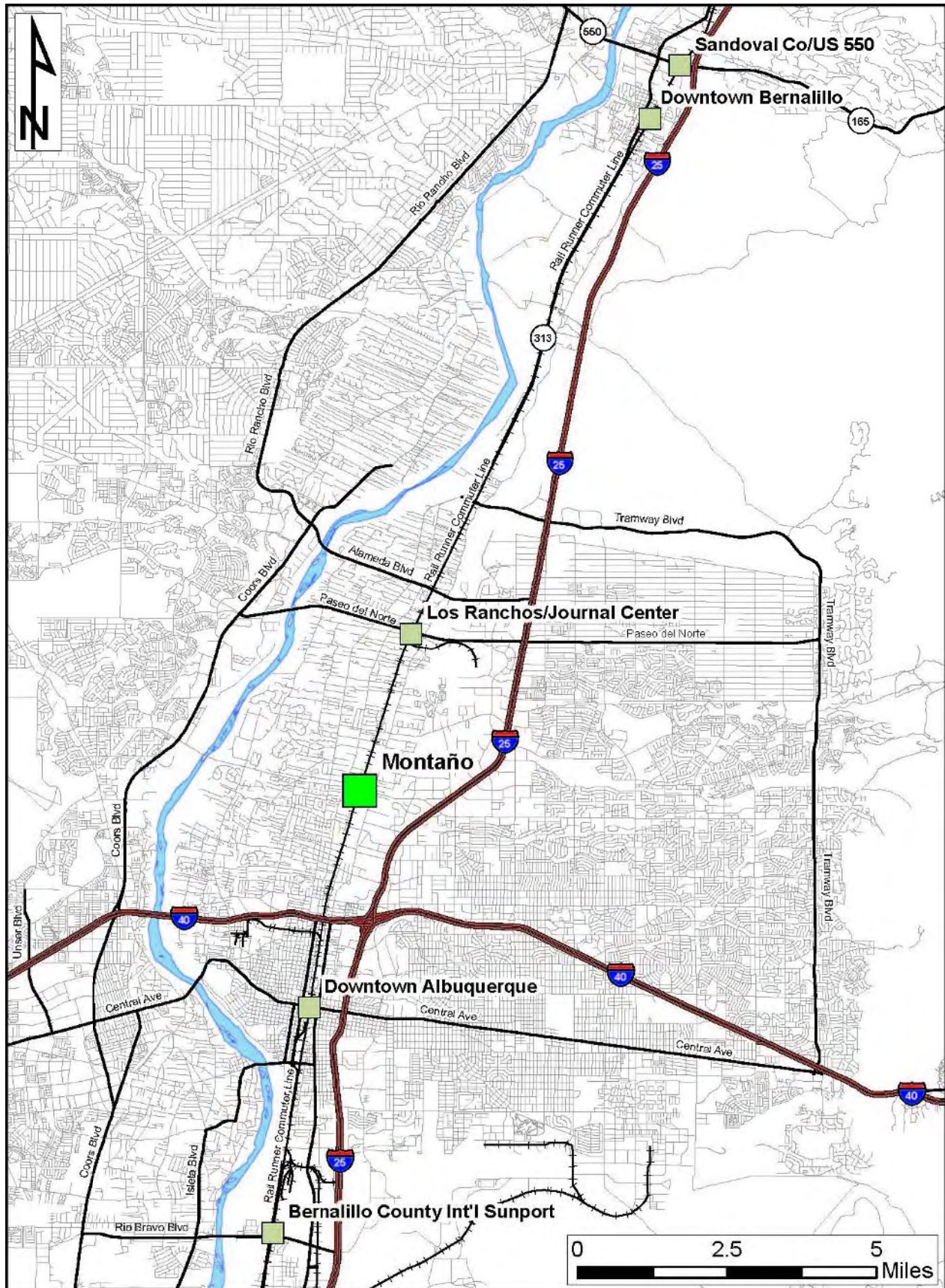


Figure 2: Rail Runner Stations within the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area



Photograph of El Pueblo Station looking south.

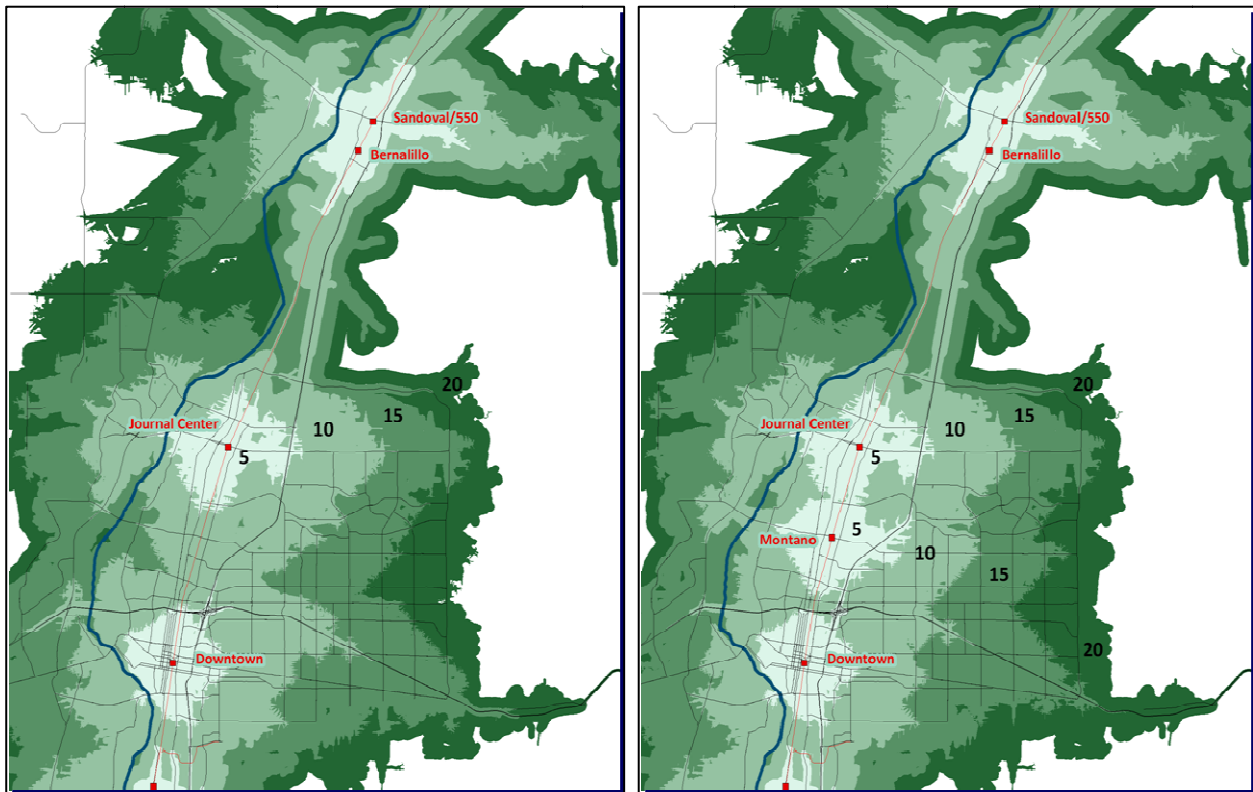


Figure 3: Comparison of Travel Times with and without the Proposed Station

According to the analysis by MRCOG, the number of people living within a 5-minute and 10-minute travel time of the Rail Runner railway would increase by approximately 17,800 and 20,400, respectively (see Figure 4). Consequently, the proposed station would substantially increase access to the Rail Runner. Also, because of the additional access and increased parking capacity, the proposed station may attract riders that do not currently use the commuter rail service.

While the current land uses surrounding the proposed Montaña Station are predominantly industrial and warehousing, the City of Albuquerque is pursuing changes to 4th Street between I-40 and Solar Road to foster the redevelopment of this commercial corridor and create a more pedestrian-friendly corridor. In addition, much of the property near the proposed station is under-utilized and potentially available for redevelopment as office and other transit-supportive uses. Approximately 600 people live within ¼ miles of the proposed station, and 950 jobs are located within the same distance. If additional redevelopment occurs in the area surrounding the proposed station, it could become a destination for train riders rather than just an origin.

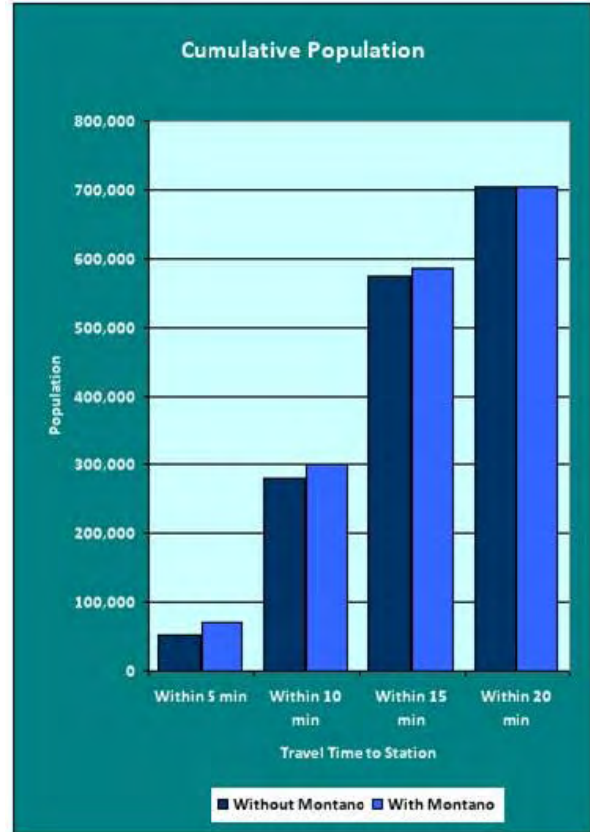


Figure 4. Potential Market Population with and without the Proposed Station

2.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Two alternatives are evaluated in this EA: the No-Action Alternative and the Build Alternative. This section of the EA provides information about these two alternatives including their major design features, cost, right-of-way needs, and traffic considerations. Background information about the development of the Build Alternative is also provided.

The site of the proposed station was selected based on three primary factors including: (1) location within an area with suitable market potential; (2) efficient access from the surrounding market area; and, (3) the availability of land suitable for station development. As discussed in the previous section, approximately 275,000 people live within a 20-minute access time of the proposed station site. This market area is comparable to the market areas of the existing El Pueblo Station and the Downtown Station. With regard to accessibility, the proposed station site is located on Montaña Road. Montaña Road is one of only four river crossings north of Interstate 40. Two of the other three river crossings are Paseo del Norte and US 550, both of which have Rail Runner stations located along their routes (the El Pueblo and Sandoval County Stations). Because the metropolitan area is split by the Rio Grande, the location of river bridges has a major influence on regional travel patterns, mobility, and accessibility. The third factor was the availability of land adjacent to the rail line. Key considerations for this factor include the size and dimensions of land parcels that were suitable for development as a park-and-ride lot. The proposed site met all of these criteria and was selected as a logical choice for a commuter rail station.

2.1 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative assumes that the proposed station would not be constructed and access to the Rail Runner would not be available at Montaña Road. Access to the Rail Runner would still be available at the Downtown Station and the El Pueblo/Journal Center Station. While the No-Action Alternative would not include the development of a station and park-and-ride lot, the parcel could be developed with other uses as allowed by its zoning for light manufacturing uses.

2.2 Build Alternative

The Build Alternative includes the construction of a passenger station and park-and-ride lot at Montaña Road. The major design features of the passenger station and parking lot include:

- The boarding platform would be approximately 500 feet in length and 18 feet wide. The sidewalk adjacent to the platform would be approximately 8 feet wide. The boarding platform would be located along the west side of the Rail Runner tracks and would start approximately 75 feet from the south edge of Montaña Road.

The boarding platform would include an overhead canopy to provide shelter from precipitation and the sun, an information kiosk, passenger seating, dynamic message boards, a public address system, and security cameras. All of the features of the station will be designed to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- The park-and-ride lot would be located immediately west of the station platform and would include parking for 100-200 vehicles, depending on which option is selected (see discussion of options below). The lot would be equipped with night-sky compliant lighting, security cameras, and an emergency telephone.

The design of the station and park-and-ride lot would be consistent with and similar to other Rail Runner stations within the Albuquerque metropolitan area. Examples of the major features of Rail Runner stations are shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Shelter and Parking Lot Configuration at the El Pueblo Station



Figure 5 Continued: Information Kiosk, Passenger Waiting Area, and Boarding Platform at El Pueblo Station

Three options are under consideration for the configuration of the park-and-ride lot. Differences in the options are the number of parking spaces provided and the level of transit service provided. The size of the overall lot and site access are the same for all three options.

Option 1 would consist of a park-and-ride lot with approximately 200 parking spaces (see Figure 6). Primary access to the station is by automobile. Secondary access to the station is provided by transit routes operating on Montañó Road. This option emphasizes parking for automobiles but does not provide on-site circulation for buses. The major design features of this option that affect its function include:

- A passenger drop off area for “kiss-and-ride” commuters to allow automobiles to drop off and pick up riders next to the station platform.
- Bus bays are provided on both sides of Montañó Road to the east of the site access driveway. These bays would provide a refuge area for buses that is out of the travel lanes while passengers board and alight.
- Sidewalk improvements would also be provided between Montañó Road and the boarding platform to facilitate pedestrian and bike access. In addition, a bike/pedestrian path from the southwest corner of the site to 2nd Street may be constructed if an agreement can be obtained from the owner of the property west of the site.
- An eastbound deceleration/right-turn lane would be provided west of the access drive. This feature would help maintain the capacity of the outside eastbound driving lane and avoid conflicts between right-turning and through vehicles.

Option 2 (see Figure 7) is similar to the first option but provides for on-site bus access and circulation. A bus lane to drop off and pick up passengers is provided adjacent to the boarding platform. A lane for automobiles to drop off and pick up riders is also provided but would be shifted away from the platform. The addition of on-site bus lanes reduces the area available for on-site parking. Consequently, this option would have approximately 140 parking spaces. All of the other design features described for Option 1 would remain.

Option 3 (see Figure 8) is similar to the first two options but includes additional emphasis on transit access. This option would include additional bus parking to allow for bus transfers as well as bus drop-off lanes for passengers transferring to the Rail Runner. Four to six buses could be accommodated on-site at the same time. The increased area for buses further reduces the space available for automobile parking. This option would accommodate approximately 100 parking spaces. All of the other design features described for Option 1 would remain.

Option 2 is the preferred option by Rio Metro. This option provides an adequate level of on-site bus access that is consistent with ABQ Ride existing and planned transit service for Montañó Road. It also maintains a high number of parking spaces that is consistent with the anticipated demand for this station. Input received from stakeholders, including ABQ Ride and the public, is generally in concurrence with the preference for Option 2. Option 1 is not preferred because it does not provide on-site bus access. Option 3 is not preferred because of the limited number of parking spaces. If the parking demand and/or transit needs of the station differ substantially from that anticipated, any of the options could be modified to meet the needs.



Figure 6: Build Alternative Option #1



Figure 7: Build Alternative Option #2



Figure 8: Build Alternative Option #3

2.3 Access and Traffic Operations

Access to the proposed station site would be from Montaña Road. The section of Montaña Road between 2nd Street east to Edith Boulevard includes a 14-foot raised median with concrete curbs. A median break with a westbound left-turn lane exists at the west end of the proposed station site. A curb cut with a throat width of approximately 40 feet also exists at the northwest corner of the project site. No other access exists for the proposed project.

As one of only four river crossings in the north half of the Albuquerque metropolitan area, Montaña Road is highly used by traffic traveling between the east and west sides of the city. Consequently, maintaining efficient traffic flow on this arterial is essential. Because the proposed project would change traffic flow on this street, a detailed assessment of its effect on traffic was prepared. The purpose of the traffic analysis was to determine if project-generated traffic would affect nearby intersections and traffic flow on Montaña Road at the site entrance. Complete information about the traffic analysis can be found in the document *Traffic Assessment for the Montaña Rail Runner Station*, January 2010. This report is on file with the MRCOG and is hereby incorporated by reference as part of this environmental assessment. The key assumptions and methodologies used for the traffic analysis were as follows.

- Existing traffic volumes and turning movement counts were collected for the intersections of Montaña Road at 2nd Street and Montaña Road at Edith Boulevard. The data were collected on November 4 and 5, 2009 for both the morning and evening peak hours. Daily traffic volumes were obtained from the MRCOG 2008 Traffic Flow Map for Montaña Road.
- Traffic generated by the proposed project was estimated for each of the parking lot design options and assumed 100, 200, and 250 parking spaces. The 250-space estimate was used to

evaluate a conservative scenario. The number of trips generated for each of these options was estimated using trip generation equations published in the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) *Trip Generation*, 8th Edition. No pass-by trips were assumed for the analyses. While it is highly likely that some pass-by or diverted link trips associated with the kiss-and-ride trips to the station, the zero pass-by assumption was used as a second measure to keep the results conservative.

- The distribution of site-generated trips was based on population and employment zonal data used for the 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the station market area as identified by MRCOG.
- Each signalized intersection was evaluated using a 120-second cycle, representative of the existing conditions. Each intersection was optimized assuming east-west coordination along Montaña Road.
- The operations analysis was conducted using the traffic model Synchro 7.0. Because traffic entering and leaving the site would coincide with and precede train arrivals, the trips associated with the site were concentrated into a 15-minute window of time. This was achieved by using a peak hour factor of 0.25 in the Synchro model.
- The results of the model were produced using the *Highway Capacity Manual* methodology.

The results of the analysis determined that the proposed project would not adversely affect traffic operations at the two closest intersections to the site: Montaña Road at 2nd Street and Montaña Road at Edith Boulevard. The proposed project would have a negligible impact on the delay and operating level of service at these two locations.

The analysis also found that the intersection of Montaña Road at the site access road would not impede traffic flow along Montaña Road, provided that the intersection is signalized. Without a traffic signal, the left-turn exit movement would encounter unacceptable delay (a failing level of service) for all three levels of assumed parking spaces. In addition, the westbound left-turn entrance to the site would fail under Option 3 (250 parking spaces).

While operating level of service is of concern, of even greater concern is vehicle queuing, both within the site and along westbound Montaña Road. The traffic density (vehicles per hour per lane) on Montaña Road during peak hours is such that gaps are not available to allow safe left-turn egress and left-turn ingress. This condition could result in drivers attempting to make two-stage left turns by waiting in the median. Alternatively, vehicles may avoid left-turns from the site and, instead, turn right (eastbound) out of the station and then make U-turns east of the railroad. Either of these situations would cause problems for traffic lane queues in the eastbound direction. Safety issues also arise, as the two-way left turn section east of the railroad tracks would allow multiple U-turn movements, which may result in vehicle conflicts.

Another impact that an unsignalized intersection would have is on pedestrians. Without a signal and protected crossing, pedestrians boarding or departing from westbound buses (on the north side of Montaña Road) would have to cross six lanes of traffic and the median to access the site. Mitigation for pedestrians could be accomplished by requiring the buses to enter the station parking area, but then buses would have the same problems turning left out of the station area, as described above.

Based on the findings of the traffic analyses, the following recommendations are assumed as part of the proposed action. These will be added as mitigation measures implemented as part of the proposed project.

- Access to the proposed site will be controlled by a traffic signal. The traffic signal will be coordinated with the signals on 2nd Street, Edith Boulevard, and the Railroad signal (to clear the tracks prior to train arrival).
- The westbound bus stop should be located west of the site access driveway if buses do not enter the station site. This measure is intended to promote pedestrian use of the signalized crosswalks at the intersection and to discourage crossing east of the signal.
- The westbound left-turn lane will be reconstructed to provide the maximum length possible to increase the storage capacity for vehicles entering the site.
- Rail Runner trains will be required to stop outside (south) of the Montaña Road right-of-way so that the railroad gates may be raised after it passes or during its dwell time to allow traffic operations to continue until the train starts moving again.

Property Acquisition and Relocations

The land needed to implement the Build Alternative, including both the station platform and park-and-ride lot, is owned by Rio Metro. Thus, construction of the station and parking area would not require the acquisition of private property. A small amount of property may be needed for the implementation of the eastbound right-turn lane into the site. If this is needed, it would involve approximately 0.10 acres of land from the property parcel immediately west of the project site. The acquisition of this property would result in a remaining parcel size of approximately 1.8 acres and would not adversely affect the viability of its uses under its current zoning (light-manufacturing).

Additional property or an easement would be needed if the optional pedestrian pathway is provided between the southwest corner of the site and 2nd Street. The property affected by this pathway is owned by the City of Albuquerque and is currently part of the facilities operated by the Albuquerque Police Department.

An overhead electric utility line crosses the project site in an east-west direction. This line includes three utility poles located within the area to be redeveloped as a park-and-ride lot. While coordination with the utility owner (PNM) will occur during design and construction, the need to relocate these structures is not anticipated. They will be integrated into the design of the parking lot.

Estimated Construction Cost

Preliminary engineering plans estimate the cost of construction of the proposed station and park-and-ride lot at approximately \$3.9 Million. This includes all costs of construction, equipment, taxes, and contingency.

3.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS AND PROJECT IMPACTS

This chapter discusses the methodology, assumptions, and findings of the assessment of alternatives, including the No-Action Alternative and the Build Alternative. The assessment focused on the effects of project alternatives on social, economic, environmental, and cultural resources and conditions within the project area. The objective of the analysis was to identify impacts that would result from the proposed project as well as the impacts of not doing anything, i.e., the No Action alternative. In addition, the analysis served to identify the need for measures to mitigate foreseeable impacts and public and agency concerns.

The impact analysis focused on issues of probable importance and those that require consultation with resource management agencies. Based on field reconnaissance and investigations of the project area, the proposed project is not expected to have impacts to the social, natural, or cultural environment. Summary information that supports this finding is provided in this section. The summaries include a brief discussion of existing conditions for each notable resource, followed by a discussion of the impact that project implementation could have on each issue.

As all three options of the Build Alternative propose the same basic elements – parking lot, station, platform, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities – the impacts of each of the options are generally expected to be the same. Therefore, the three options are discussed together in this document. When any differences between the three options to the Build Alternative are identified (e.g., traffic), then the impacts are provided for each option.

3.1 Environmental Setting

The Montaña Station project area is within the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico. Albuquerque is located in central New Mexico within the Rio Grande Valley along the west slope of the Sandia Mountains. The proposed project is located within the north-central portion of the Albuquerque metropolitan area and is located within the municipal limits of Albuquerque, although unincorporated areas of Bernalillo County exist on the east side of the railroad tracks.

The elevation of Albuquerque ranges from approximately 4,950 feet to almost 5,900 feet above sea level. The elevation at the center of the project area is approximately 4,980 feet. Because of Albuquerque's location in a broad river valley and along the foothills of the Sandia Mountains, the terrain ranges from flat to rolling hills, with grades sloping towards the Rio Grande. The terrain within the project area is flat, reflective of its location within the river valley area.

The project area is urban in character and is mostly developed, with the exception of the vacant parcel where the proposed project is located and a few other nearby parcels. The built environment is predominantly composed of light industrial and warehouse facilities and office and commercial uses. Residential areas are nearby but generally located away from the project area at distances more than 600 feet from the proposed station site. Development within the project area is served by the city street system, storm water and flood control systems, and overhead and underground utilities.

Areas with natural vegetation are scant within the project area. In most locations, the vegetation consists of weedy and other invasive small shrub and grass species indicative of site disturbance. Wildlife is minimal; there are no animal populations within the project area.

3.2 Neighborhoods, Communities, and Environmental Justice

Infrastructure improvement projects can impact neighborhoods and communities in a number of ways. These include the displacement of residents, changes to neighborhoods, disruption of community cohesion, loss of access to community facilities, changes in travel patterns, or effects on police, fire, and emergency medical service access.

The evaluation of a project's effect on social conditions also includes civil rights and environmental justice considerations, which protect certain segments of the overall population from discrimination and from bearing disproportionate adverse impacts of transportation improvements. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 [42 U.S.C. 2000D et seq. and related statutes] ensures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability, be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal funding assistance. Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations) promotes environmental justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations.

Existing Conditions

Existing conditions within the project area that are germane to neighborhoods and communities include the demographic composition of the project area, the presence and structure of nearby neighborhoods, and the location of facilities that serve the community (e.g., libraries, schools, community centers, churches, etc.).

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the project area population were reviewed to identify the presence of groups that may require special consideration (consistent with Title VI and EO 12898) for public notification and involvement and in the assessment of project impacts. Data from the US Census Bureau's 2000 Decennial Census were analyzed to determine the demographic characteristics of the project area. While the Census data is nearly 10 years old, it is thought to still be representative of the project area due to its location in an older and established part of the metropolitan area.

Six block groups are located within ½ mile of the proposed station – see Figure 9. At least one or more of the block groups include high percentages of Hispanic residents, elderly persons, and low-income groups, as compared to these same statistics for Bernalillo County as a whole. Two of the block groups show higher percentages of persons who walk, carpool, or utilize public transportation to travel to work, while one block group has a high percentage of persons who work at home. The 2000 US Census data for the six block groups within ½-mile radius are shown in Table 1.

Neighborhood Associations

Information on neighborhood associations (NA) within the project vicinity was obtained from the City of Albuquerque GIS site and the COA and Bernalillo County's Offices of Neighborhood Coordination (see Figure 10). Neighborhood associations recognized by the city were updated in December 2009, from which the following associations were identified:

- Los Alamos NA is located northwest of the proposed project site.
- Greater Gardner NA lies at the southwest corner of the project area and includes the proposed site.

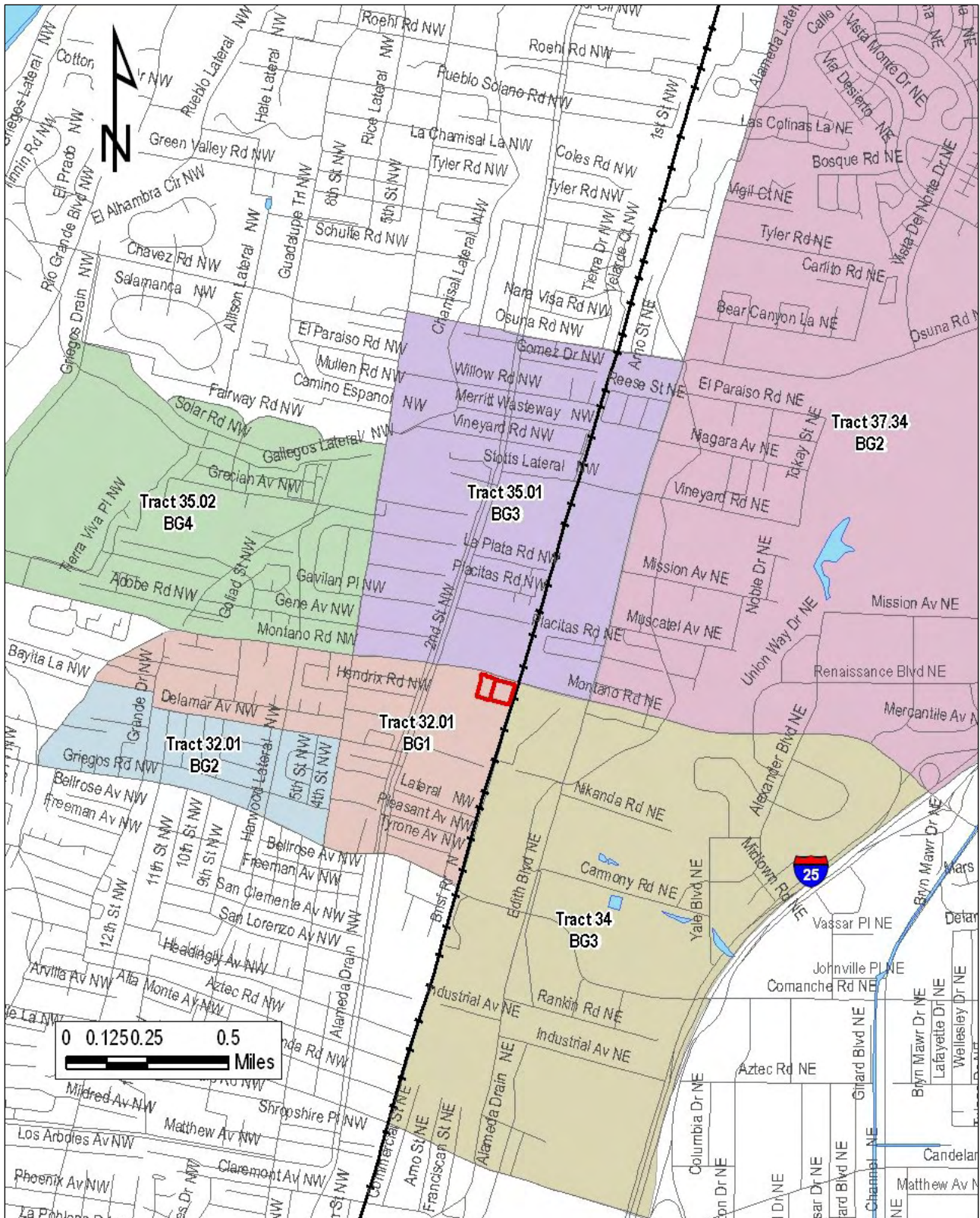


Figure 9: 2000 US Census Block Groups

Table 1: 2000 US Census Block Group Data

	New Mexico	Bernalillo County	Tr 32.01 BG1	Tr 32.01 BG2	Tr 34 BG3	Tr 35.01 BG3	Tr 35.02 BG4	Tr 37.34 BG2
Total population	1819046	556678	1681	1237	557	2170	1406	2303
White	66.75%	70.75%	63.77%	67.10%	77.92%	62.76%	80.87%	71.60%
Black	1.89%	2.77%	2.50%	0.65%	5.21%	1.24%	0.64%	1.56%
Native American	9.54%	4.16%	2.08%	3.88%	6.82%	3.18%	1.85%	2.43%
Asian	1.14%	2.03%	1.25%	0.16%	0.36%	0.41%	0.57%	0.48%
Some other race	17.04%	16.07%	24.51%	23.12%	9.16%	28.39%	12.59%	20.84%
Two or more races	3.65%	4.22%	5.89%	5.09%	0.54%	4.01%	3.49%	3.08%
Hispanic	42.08%	41.96%	65.79%	64.75%	62.30%	62.63%	41.39%	49.33%
under 5	7.18%	6.93%	5.06%	5.34%	2.15%	6.59%	5.19%	6.34%
5 - 17	20.78%	18.40%	23.32%	19.73%	45.96%	21.84%	18.49%	16.93%
18 - 24	9.76%	10.34%	10.77%	7.68%	19.93%	9.35%	7.04%	8.64%
25 - 39	20.59%	22.34%	20.40%	21.02%	10.23%	20.92%	17.07%	18.41%
40 - 64	30.03%	30.47%	30.16%	33.14%	13.29%	31.71%	37.62%	29.92%
65 and over	11.67%	11.52%	10.29%	13.10%	8.44%	9.59%	14.58%	19.76%
Total Workers 16 years +:								
Car; truck; or van	90.58%	90.45%	94.41%	93.62%	66.99%	88.27%	88.65%	95.48%
Drove alone	75.76%	77.40%	83.80%	85.07%	64.08%	67.54%	78.66%	82.37%
Carpooled	14.82%	13.05%	10.61%	8.56%	2.91%	20.74%	9.99%	13.12%
Public transportation	0.80%	1.48%	2.65%	2.52%	3.88%	0.76%	0.00%	0.00%
Bicycle	0.56%	0.94%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.43%	0.00%	0.00%
Walked	2.82%	2.55%	1.40%	0.00%	8.74%	4.78%	0.00%	1.18%
Other means	0.82%	0.54%	1.54%	0.67%	15.53%	3.15%	0.00%	1.94%
Worked at home	4.21%	3.83%	0.00%	3.19%	4.85%	2.61%	11.35%	1.40%
Median HH income (1999)	\$34,133	\$38,788	\$32,273	\$37,857	\$32,604	\$26,595	\$49,028	\$34,851
Per capita income (1999)	\$17,261	20,790	\$16,277	\$16,723	\$5,884	\$12,051	\$24,155	\$18,369
Persons Below Poverty Level	18.44%	13.70%	17.45%	11.91%	14.62%	19.67%	4.36%	17.40%
Unemployed	7.23%	5.74%	6.65%	9.32%	0.00%	10.44%	0.00%	5.63%

Other nearby city neighborhood associations include:

- Monkbridge Gardens to the southwest
- Los Poblanos to the west
- Guadalupe Village Homeowner's Association (HOA), Lee Acres, and Spanish Walk HOA to the northwest
- Alameda North Valley, Vista Del Norte Alliance, and Northeast Valley to the north

Bernalillo County neighborhood associations have some overlap with the city associations. The neighborhood associations that are recognized by Bernalillo County (updated January 2010) and located within the project vicinity include:

- Merritt Acres, which is located north of the proposed station site within Albuquerque.

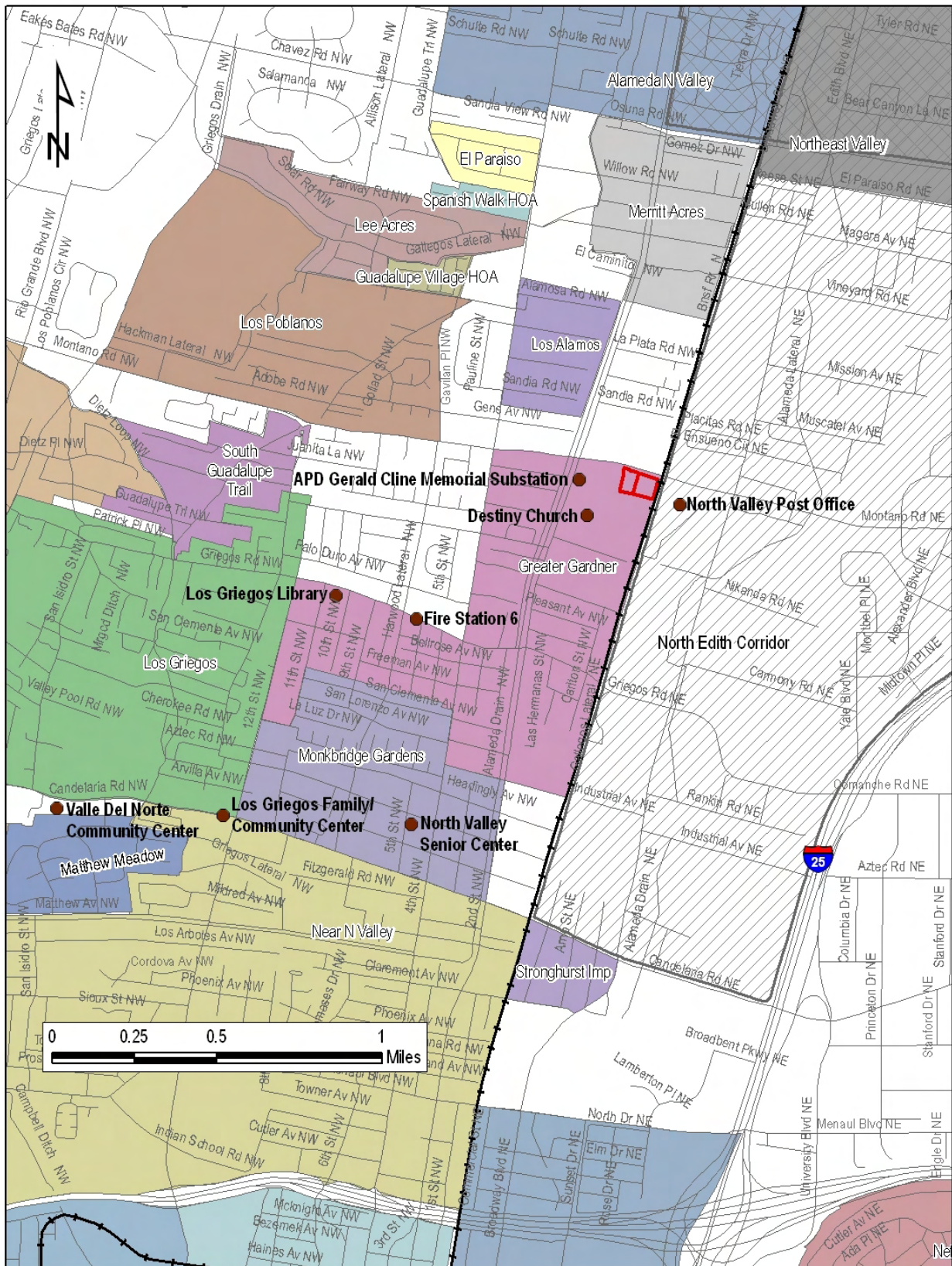


Figure 10: Neighborhood Associations and Community Facilities

- North Edith Corridor, which is located east of the railroad tracks and covers the entire area adjacent to the station platform. This association overlaps the Alameda North Valley and the Northeast Valley neighborhood associations.
- El Paraiso, which is located north of Montaña Road and west of 4th Street

Community Facilities

There are several community facilities within ½ mile of the project area (see Figure 10). The North Valley Post Office is located east of the railroad tracks and the GCC Portland Cement property and is accessed via Montaña Road. The Albuquerque Police Department (APD) Gerald Cline Memorial Substation, Training Academy, and Forensic Science Complex are located at the southwest corner of the site. The Destiny Church is located south of the APD property.

Other facilities that serve the communities within the project area include:

- Fire Station 6, located at 623 Griegos Road NW
- Los Griegos Library, located at 1000 Griegos Road NW
- The North Valley Senior Center, Los Griegos Family/Community Center, and Valle Del Norte Community Center, which are located southwest of the project area along Candelaria Road NW.

Impacts

No adverse impacts to environmental justice populations, neighborhoods, or community facilities are anticipated. While environmental justice populations were identified in the project vicinity, impacts of the proposed project would not be disproportionately high or adverse to minority or low-income persons. To the contrary, the proposed project will provide alternative modes of travel for nearby residents to access employment and services in the Albuquerque and Santa Fe metropolitan areas. Land use will not be changed, as discussed in the following section, nor will the use of remnant parcels be affected (see discussion in Section 2). Access to facilities and local streets along Montaña Road will not be changed nor will travel patterns change substantially as a result of the proposed project. Coordination with the neighborhood associations and community overall did not result in any concerns with the proposed project – the comments received indicated support for the project. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not cause adverse impacts to environmental justice populations, community facilities, community cohesion, or neighborhoods. No mitigation measures would be required to implement the Montaña Station.

3.3 Land Use and Development

Changes in accessibility and mobility resulting from infrastructure projects can affect where and how land development occurs. Montaña Road is also a river crossing, and thus, is an important part of the regional transportation system. The major roadways in the project vicinity, which include Montaña Road, 2nd Street, 4th Street, and Edith Boulevard, provide access to residential and commercial areas in the project area as well as throughout the entire north central Albuquerque area. For this reason, the effect of the proposed project on land use and development is an important consideration in the comparison of project alternatives.

Existing Conditions

The site for the proposed Montaña Station is located west of the existing railroad tracks and south of Montaña Road NW, between 2nd Street NW and Edith Boulevard NE. Vehicle access to the site is via Montaña Road, which includes an existing median break to accommodate full access. The proposed

project site is a relatively flat and vacant lot with no natural vegetation and no buildings or structures present. It is located in an urban setting, and the majority of the land surrounding the proposed site is used for manufacturing, industrial, or governmental purposes.

The site is bounded on the east by the railroad tracks. Located east of the railroad tracks and south of Montaña Road is GCC Rio Grande Portland Cement Corporation. Just east of GCC is the North Valley Carrier Post Office located at 110 Montaña Road NW. The site is bounded on the south by the Albuquerque Police Department, Gerald E. Cline Memorial Substation, Valley Area Command, a complex that includes the Roger Hoisington Training Academy and the Metropolitan Forensic Science Center. To the west of the station site lie the City's Water Authority dry-out yard (a site used for the temporary storage of soils removed while constructing and/or maintaining the regional public water system) and a Farmers Insurance Group Office (Apodaca Insurance) located at 152 Montaña Road NW. There are several small parcels west of the station. Most of these are small offices or other small businesses, but two of the parcels are residential. The site is bounded on the north by Montaña Road. A warehouse complex is located north of Montaña Road and consists of a large cold storage warehouse and food distribution center. This location is the Montaña Distribution Center and is occupied by three tenants – US. Food Service, Core-Mark, and AADF, all of which are food distribution and transportation logistics companies.

Figure 11 shows the general land use in the project vicinity. As shown in this figure, land use immediately adjacent to the site is a mixture of industrial, manufacturing, and institutional uses, with a few small parcels of residential use. Two residential parcels are located west of the site along Montaña Road. Much larger parcels used for residential purposes exist to the west and in scattered locations to the north, south, and east.

The project area falls within the study boundary and the corridor boundary of an area defined by the *Draft North Fourth Street Rank III Corridor Plan*. The proposed station site is also within the boundaries of the North Fourth Transit Oriented Development zone. The City of Albuquerque's *Draft North Fourth Street Rank III Corridor Plan* proposes redevelopment of 4th Street to revitalize the area and make redevelopment possible in order to:

- improve the business climate
- improve the physical appearance and infrastructure along 4th Street
- create a unifying vision for the North Valley
- tie neighborhoods together – create a “Main Street” feel
- create a positive force for North Valley redevelopment

The proposed project is consistent with this use.

One other Sector Plan boundary is located within the project vicinity – the Los Griegos Sector Plan (also titled the Los Griegos Neighborhood Development Plan) was prepared in 1987 and was adopted by the city in 1992. This document addresses the redevelopment of the area to serve the residents and revitalize neighborhoods. The proposed station site is near but not within the boundaries of this plan.

Impacts

Under the No-Action Alternative, land use and development of the proposed site would be that allowed by its underlying zoning — M-1, Light Manufacturing. This zoning designation allows various warehousing,

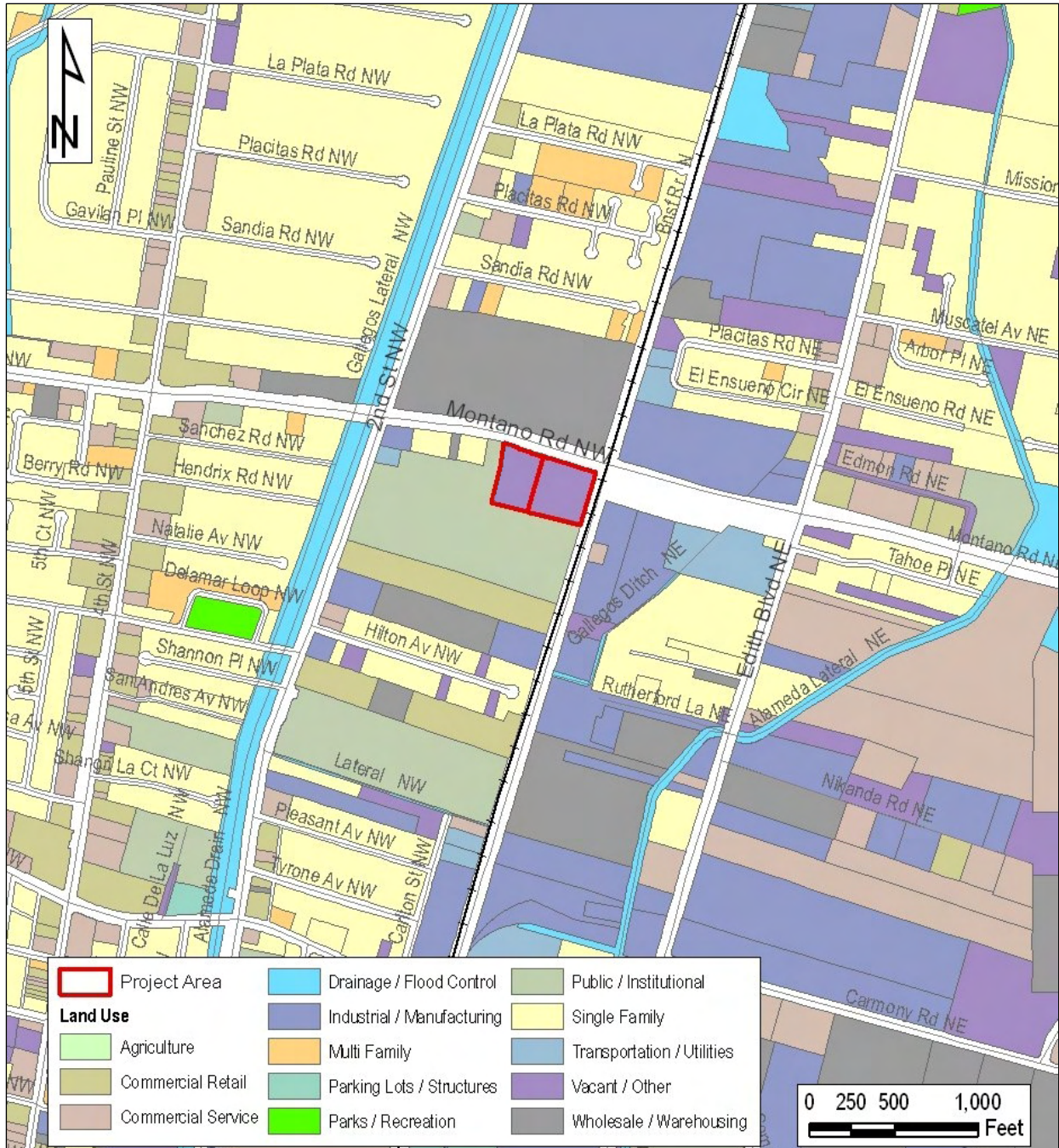


Figure 11: Existing Land Use

manufacturing, light industrial, and heavy commercial development. Depending on the actual type of development that occurs, development of the site under the No-Action Alternative would result in site-generated traffic, noise, and other activities.

The Build Alternative would change the site specific land use and how the site is developed, as compared to the No-Action Alternative. However, it would not affect the continued use or viability of nearby land use and/or zoning designations. All three of the build alternative options would have the same impacts to land use and would convert the existing vacant parcel to a parking lot and passenger boarding station. Use of

this parcel as a rail station would be compatible with the industrial and government properties located around the station site and would provide access for employees who work in the area. The surrounding land uses would be supported by changing the project parcel use from vacant/other to transit use.

The proposed station would not adversely impact continued viability of the residential land uses located west, south, and east of the station site. These residential areas have coexisted with rail operations at the Montaña Road railroad crossing and nearby industrial uses for many decades. The proposed new station would increase traffic circulation at the site entrance. However, overall, traffic volumes would not change significantly along Montaña Road. The proposed station would be consistent with existing efforts to stimulate redevelopment and growth of the commercial areas on 4th Street.

3.4 Business and Economic Impacts

Transportation improvements can cause a variety of short- and long-term effects on businesses in the project area. These effects can include factors such as changes to customer, employee, or service-related access during construction as well as for the long-term, loss of parking, out-of-direction travel as a result of changes in access, changes in land use and zoning, and changes to property values.

Existing Conditions

As discussed above, land use in the project area is mainly commercial and light industrial, with residential uses further removed from the project site. The businesses within the immediate vicinity of the project site and other nearby businesses include:

- Farmers Insurance Group Office - Apodaca Insurance
- GCC Rio Grande Portland Cement Corporation
- U.S. Food Service warehouse complex
- Rainbow/Sara Lee Outlet
- Enterprise Car Rental
- Gemini Fireworks
- Auto Concepts
- Albuquerque Health Services

In general, most of the business within the project area are industrial, manufacturing/warehousing, and light commercial complexes that have existed in their current locations for many years. The nearby businesses are shown in Figure 12.

Employment data for the project area were obtained from MRCOG data files. The most recent employment estimates were prepared in 2008. Three types of employment are tallied: basic, retail, and service. The change in employment (or number of jobs) between 2008 and 2030 is shown in Figure 13 for the data analysis subzones (DASZs) that lie within ½ mile of the project area. The category of basic employment includes agriculture, mining, construction, manufacturing, utilities, transportation, communications, wholesaling, and military enlistment. Retail employment includes retail stores and eating/drinking establishments. Service employment includes financial, real estate, insurance, and services such as lodging, medical, educational, engineering, legal, entertainment, and government.

Comparisons between the 2008 and 2030 datasets show that, while the types of employment change from zone to zone, in general, employment within the project area remains relatively static. Service



Figure 12: Nearby Businesses



Figure 13: DASZ Employment Data

employment makes gains in the two zones located at the east end of the project vicinity; otherwise, the change in employment is not significant. The proposed station would provide additional access to employees and customers, regardless of the type of business destination.

Impacts

The No-Action alternative would not adversely affect the economy or businesses. However, the No-Action alternative would not provide alternative modes of transportation to jobs or services in the project vicinity.

In general, the Build Alternative options would not have adverse impacts to nearby businesses or the economy of the area. The major impacts that facilities such as that proposed can have on economic activity involve changes in access and difficulty of access. Because the proposed station would not alter existing access along Montaña Road or along other streets serving the project area, adverse impacts to nearby businesses would not occur. However, access to these businesses could be affected by congestion caused by traffic entering and leaving the station site. To assess this potential, the changes to site congestion that would result from the proposed project were assessed. The findings of the traffic impact analysis found that access to the proposed station site would not impact traffic operations within the Montaña Road corridor, if the site access were controlled by a traffic signal. The analysis indicated that traffic levels of service (see Chapter 2 for more discussion of the traffic analysis) for the 2nd Street and Edith Blvd. intersections with Montaña Road will remain basically the same as the existing conditions, with about 1 to 2 additional seconds of delay with a traffic signal at the proposed site entrance.

If the station access site is not signalized, then that intersection would operate at poor to failing level of service. Although Montaña Road has good progression and vehicle platooning (i.e., the spacing between moving vehicles), and a sufficient number of median gaps to serve left-turn egress, the gaps in vehicles would be insufficient to serve site traffic with unsignalized access control. A traffic signal is proposed as part of the project to facilitate left turns for Rail Runner patrons.

Based on the findings of the traffic analysis and the absence of other factors that would adversely affect nearby businesses, the proposed project would not have adverse impacts to nearby businesses or the economy of the area in general. It would not affect access or reduce the visibility of existing businesses. The proposed project may provide benefits to the economy of the area by providing an alternative mode of transportation for employees and customers to reach businesses or jobs in the project area. Short-term impacts would result during construction, but these are temporary impacts that would not continue past construction. Mitigation measures to reduce construction impacts are included and described in Section 3.14.

3.5 Noise

Noise impacts from proposed transportation projects occur when project-generated noise levels approach or exceed certain thresholds. While criteria exist for non-residential properties, the assessment of impacts is usually focused on residential and other similar noise-sensitive properties such as schools, hospitals, libraries, etc. For roadway projects, a noise abatement threshold of 67 L_{eq} dB(A) has been established by the Federal Highway Administration. For transit and passenger rail projects, the impact threshold varies based on ambient conditions and land use, but is generally based on 65 L_{dn} for residential lands. L_{eq} is an “average” noise level for a specific period (usually one hour for traffic noise to represent noise levels during peak traffic periods). The letters dB(A) stand for A-weighted decibels. A-weighting uses the sound frequencies that are within the range of human hearing. L_{dn} is “day-night

sound level” and represents the sound exposure level for a 24-hour period. It is calculated by adding the sound exposure level obtained during the daytime and evening (7 a.m. to 10 p.m.) to 10 times the sound exposure level obtained during the nighttime (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.). This approach adjusts the sound level for increased sensitivity for nighttime hours when people are most affected by noise.

FHWA noise Abatement Criteria are set forth in Table 2 below. The FTA criteria are shown in Figure 14.

Table 2: FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria

Activity Category	dBA Leq	Description of Land Use Activity Areas
A	57 (exterior)	Lands on which serenity and quiet are of extra-ordinary significance and serve an important public need and where the preservation of those qualities is essential if the area is to continue to serve its intended purpose.
B	67 exterior	Picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds, active sports areas, parks, residences, motels, schools, churches, libraries and hospitals.
C	72 (exterior)	Developed lands, properties or activities not included in categories A or B above.
D	--	Undeveloped lands.
E	52 (interior)	Residences, motels, public meeting rooms, schools, churches, libraries, hospitals and auditoriums.

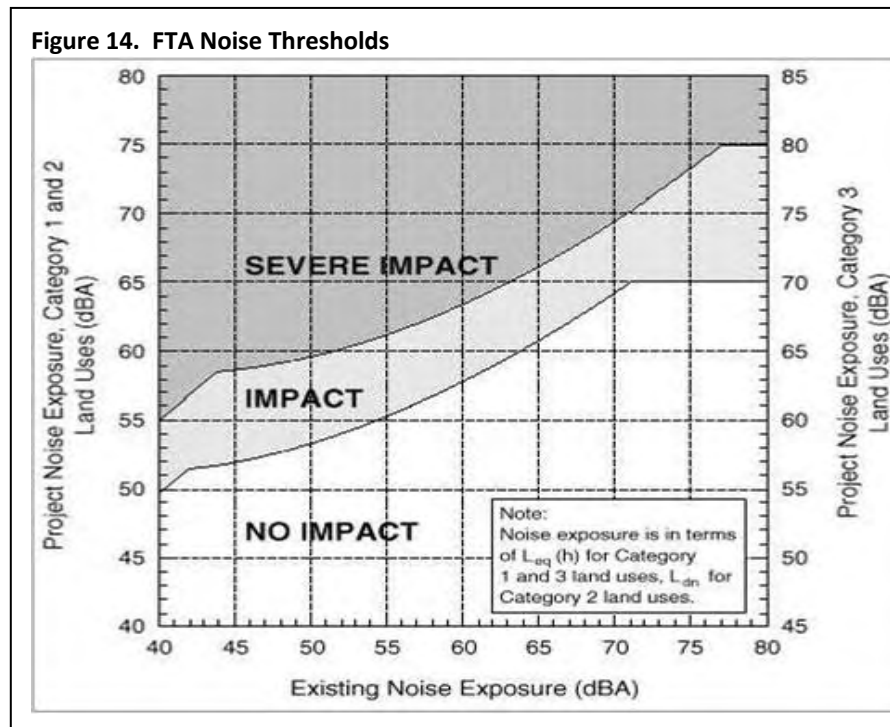
Note: Primary consideration is given to exterior areas (Category A, B or C) where frequent human activity occurs. However, interior areas (Category E) may be used if exterior areas are physically shielded from the roadway, or if there is little or no human activity in exterior areas adjacent to the roadway. The NAC should only be used as absolute values, which when approached or exceeded, require the consideration of traffic noise abatement measures.

Existing Conditions

Because of the industrial and manufacturing operations within the study area and the moderate to heavy traffic volumes using Montañó Road, ambient noise levels are relatively high. The primary noise sources include traffic noise from Montañó Road, noise from trucks entering and leaving the City’s Water Authority dry-out yard and the U.S. Food Service warehouse complex, and noise from passing trains. The closest residence (156 Montañó Road NW) is located over 700 feet from

the proposed station platform and over 400 feet from the entrance to the proposed park-and-ride lot. Based on field data collected at the same distance from Montañó Road as the closest residence (~22 feet from the curb), ambient noise levels currently range from approximately 67 dB(A) to 72 dBA during peak traffic periods.

Figure 14. FTA Noise Thresholds



Noise Impacts

Noise from the proposed project could result from two sources. The first source is site-generated traffic from cars, buses, and other vehicles entering and leaving the site. The second source is noise from trains that approach, stop, and depart from the station. Both of these sources are discussed below.

The No-Action Alternative would not cause any changes in noise levels. Over time, ambient noise would likely increase as traffic volumes increase on Montaña Road and land use surrounding the proposed station site intensifies.

Noise levels at the project site and in the area immediately surrounding the site would likely increase as a result of the Build Alternative. However, the change in noise would be small at the residential properties and other noise-sensitive land use categories near the project site. Noise from autos and buses accessing the park-and-ride lot and circulating within the parking lot would add to existing noise produced by traffic using Montaña Road. However, the increase would be negligible. Because noise is a measure of sound energy, a doubling of sound energy produces an increase of about 3 decibels. Thus, traffic volumes would have to double for a 3 dB(A) change to occur. According to the traffic analysis conducted for the proposed station, traffic volumes on Montaña Road during the morning or evening peak hour range from about 2,500 to 2,600 vehicles per hour. Approximately 120 trips would be generated by a park-and-ride lot with 200 parking spaces. Assuming all of the site-generated trips are new, the traffic increase on Montaña Road would be approximately 5%. This increase would be negligible in terms of sound energy change.

Likewise, traffic circulating within the parking lot would not generate significant noise levels at any nearby residential properties or at the church located south of the proposed station site. The closest residential properties are approximately 600 feet from the center of the proposed parking area. Because vehicles circulating within the parking lot are only 5% of the traffic volume on Montaña Road, the noise produced by on-site vehicles would be inconsequential.

Rail Runner and other trains (AMTRAK and BNSF Freight) currently use the north-south railway at the east side of the proposed station site (approximately 20 to 22 train operations total each day). The noise generated by these trains is an existing condition and would not change substantially as a result of the proposed station. However, some change in train noise could occur as a result of the change in train operations and speed — i.e., as trains slow, stop, and accelerate from the station. Data collected in other locations where the Rail Runner operates found little difference in noise levels from passing trains when compared to trains approaching and leaving station sites. However, the duration of noise would increase as a result of trains stopped while passengers enter and exit train cars. Dwell time at stations is typically less than 2 minutes. Thus, the added noise from stopped trains would increase by about 2 minutes each time a train stops. Assuming 18 train operations each day, trains would sit at idle approximately 36 minutes each day.

Data collected at other Rail Runner stations found that locomotive noise from trains at idle is about 73 dBA measured 50 feet from the engine. Sound from a stationary source decays at a rate of 6 dBA for every doubling of distance. Thus, locomotive noise at the closest residential property to the proposed station (approximately 700 feet away from the platform) would be about 50 dB(A) — a level that is well below the severe impact thresholds of 65 L_{dn} and 67 L_{eq} criteria used by FTA and FHWA.

3.6 Air Quality

Air quality in the Albuquerque area is influenced by its topographical and meteorological characteristics and by the various sources of pollutants such as automobiles, wood burning, unpaved roads, stationary sources, etc. The City of Albuquerque is situated in a river valley that is sheltered by the Sandia Mountains to the east and by the mesa escarpment to the west. This setting reduces air movement within the Middle Rio Grande Valley, and combined with frequent nighttime temperature inversions, contributes to the accumulation of various pollutants during the winter months. In the past, air monitoring stations within Albuquerque and Bernalillo County frequently recorded carbon monoxide (CO) concentrations well above the national ambient air quality standard for this pollutant. However, stricter vehicle emission controls and other pollution control programs at the federal and local levels resulted in a decline in CO levels, and no violations of federal standards have been recorded in Bernalillo County since 1991. Accordingly, Bernalillo County is currently designated as a “maintenance area” for carbon monoxide and is under a 20-year maintenance plan, which commenced in 1996.

In accordance with federal conformity rules for CO maintenance areas, the second 10-year period of the maintenance plan (i.e., 2006 through 2016) does not require compliance with a regional emissions budget as part of the conformity determination. Conformity is limited to a “hot-spot” analysis to verify that the proposed transportation project would not cause a violation of federal CO standards. Bernalillo County is in “attainment” for all other air pollutants regulated by National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

Existing Conditions

The Montañó Station area primarily consists of commercial and government buildings. Some of the industrial activities near the proposed station produce air pollutants; however, the pollutants are primarily small particulates. The greatest source of pollutants is likely vehicular emissions and residential wood burning. According to the MRCOG 2008 Traffic Flow Map, the average daily traffic flow on Montañó Road in 2008 near the proposed station was 28,700 vehicles.

Monitoring of ambient air quality within Bernalillo County is performed by the Albuquerque Environmental Health Department’s Air Quality Division (AEHD). According to data published by AEHD, the closest ambient air quality monitor station to the proposed station site is located approximately 1.7 miles NE of the project area (the 2ZS Singer monitor). This monitor only measures particulate matter (PM₁₀). Additional air quality monitoring stations are located 2.6 miles to the east (2ZM -- Del Norte monitor), 4.0 miles to the southeast (2ZU -- San Pedro monitor), and 4.5 miles to the southeast (2ZE -- Uptown Zuni monitor), all of which monitor CO levels. The highest 8-hour CO concentrations recorded at each of the three monitors for the years 2006, 2007, and 2008 (see Table 3 below) are well below the EPA Air Quality Standards of 9 parts per million (ppm) for an 8-hour average period.

Table 3: Carbon Monoxide Monitoring Data

Monitoring Station	8-Hour CO Concentration (1 st Max / 2 nd Max): EPA Std = 9 ppm		
	2006	2007	2008
2ZM Del Norte	2.0 / 2.0	2.4 / 1.6	1.7 / 1.1
2ZU San Pedro	3.0 / 3.0	2.7 / 2.5	2.4 / 2.3
2ZE Uptown Zuni	2.8 / 2.7	3.6 / 3.4	1.8 / 1.7

Another category of pollutants of potential concern within urban areas is mobile source air toxics (MSAT). MSAT include various pollutants emitted by motor vehicles that are known or suspected to cause cancer

or other health and environmental effects. Air pollution control programs at the national level, especially those involving cleaner fuel and engine technologies, are expected to substantially decrease MSAT emissions in the future. The analysis of air toxics and their health impact is an evolving topic of research, and the tools and techniques for assessing project-specific impacts are limited. Nonetheless, methods are available to estimate the effect of projects on mobile source air toxics.

Guidance provided by the EPA and FHWA includes qualitative methods for assessing MSAT impacts of roadway projects. A qualitative analysis provides a basis for identifying and comparing the potential differences among MSAT emissions, if any, from various project alternatives. The qualitative assessment used for this proposed project is derived, in part from a study conducted by FHWA entitled *A Methodology for Evaluating Mobile Source Air Toxic Emissions Among Transportation Project Alternatives*. This document can be found at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/airtoxic/index.htm>.

Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not have adverse impacts to air quality. Site-generated emissions would likely increase as the site, which is currently vacant, is developed with a use consistent with its zoning for light manufacturing uses.

Based on the relatively small increase in local traffic that would result from the Build Alternative, and the land use characteristics of the Montaña Station study area, the change in CO concentrations would be negligible and would remain well below NAAQS for CO.

The Build Alternative options would not have adverse impacts on air quality. The Build Alternative may generate additional MSAT emissions from new trips (2-3% increase in local daily traffic) traveling to and from the Montaña Station area, in addition to a negligible amount of evaporative emissions from parked vehicles at the park-and-ride lot. Therefore, under each build alternative option, there may be localized areas where emissions of MSAT would increase, as compared to the No-Action Alternative. The magnitude and duration of these potential increases cannot be accurately quantified due to incomplete and unavailable information and tools to forecast project-specific MSAT impacts. While the localized level of MSAT emissions could be higher in the project location compared to the No-Action Alternative, these increases are expected to be offset by lower levels of MSAT emissions in the metropolitan area due to shorter travel times/distances to the closest Rail Runner station and the increased use of the Rail Runner train. Thus, on a regional/metropolitan scale, the net change in emissions would be negligible. Also, regardless of the alternative chosen, MSAT emissions will likely be lower in the 2030 design year than present levels. This reduction is expected as a result of EPA's national control programs that are projected to reduce annual MSAT emissions by 72% between 1999 and 2050.

Short-term nuisance impacts to air quality could occur during site construction. Dust from site grading and construction activities would increase over ambient conditions. The contractor will be required to implement dust control measures during site grading activities. These measures could include the application of water during site grading to reduce site generated dust.

3.7 Bicycle, Pedestrian and Transit Facilities

Bicycling and walking are important elements to be considered in conjunction with developing transit infrastructure. The consideration of bicycle and pedestrian elements in transportation projects is mandated in Title 23 and in SAFETEA-LU. The goals of including bicycle and pedestrian elements are to increase walking and bicycling as a viable means of transportation and to promote and facilitate the

increased use of non-motorized transportation. Transit options (bus service) are also an important consideration when analyzing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In conjunction with bicycles and walking, bus routes increase the acceptable range of travel.

Existing Conditions

Pedestrian access is provided by sidewalks along both sides of Montaño Road. Sidewalks also exist along the east side of 2nd Street and along Edith Blvd., both of which provide access to other paths and trails as well as bus routes in the area. A potential trail connection is proposed that would connect the parking lot to 2nd Street - see Section 2 for further discussion.

The segment of Montaño Road adjacent to the proposed station site includes shoulders signed as bicycle lanes in both directions of travel. The shoulders and bike lane designation end just east of 2nd Street and then resume again at 5th Street, continuing west to Unser Boulevard. Bicycle routes are present east of the station on Edith Boulevard, extending north from Montaño Road to Osuna Road and south of Montaño Road to Candelaria Road. Also within ½ mile of the proposed station site is the Alameda Drain, which is used by cyclists as a bicycle trail.

The 2007 Long Range Bikeways Map (published in the 2030 MTP) shows “proposed bike lanes” along 2nd Street north and south of the project area (see Figure 15). As discussed in the preceding paragraph, the proposed lanes along Montaño Road between Edith Boulevard and 2nd Street, and the proposed route on Edith Boulevard south of Montaño Road have been implemented since this map was published.

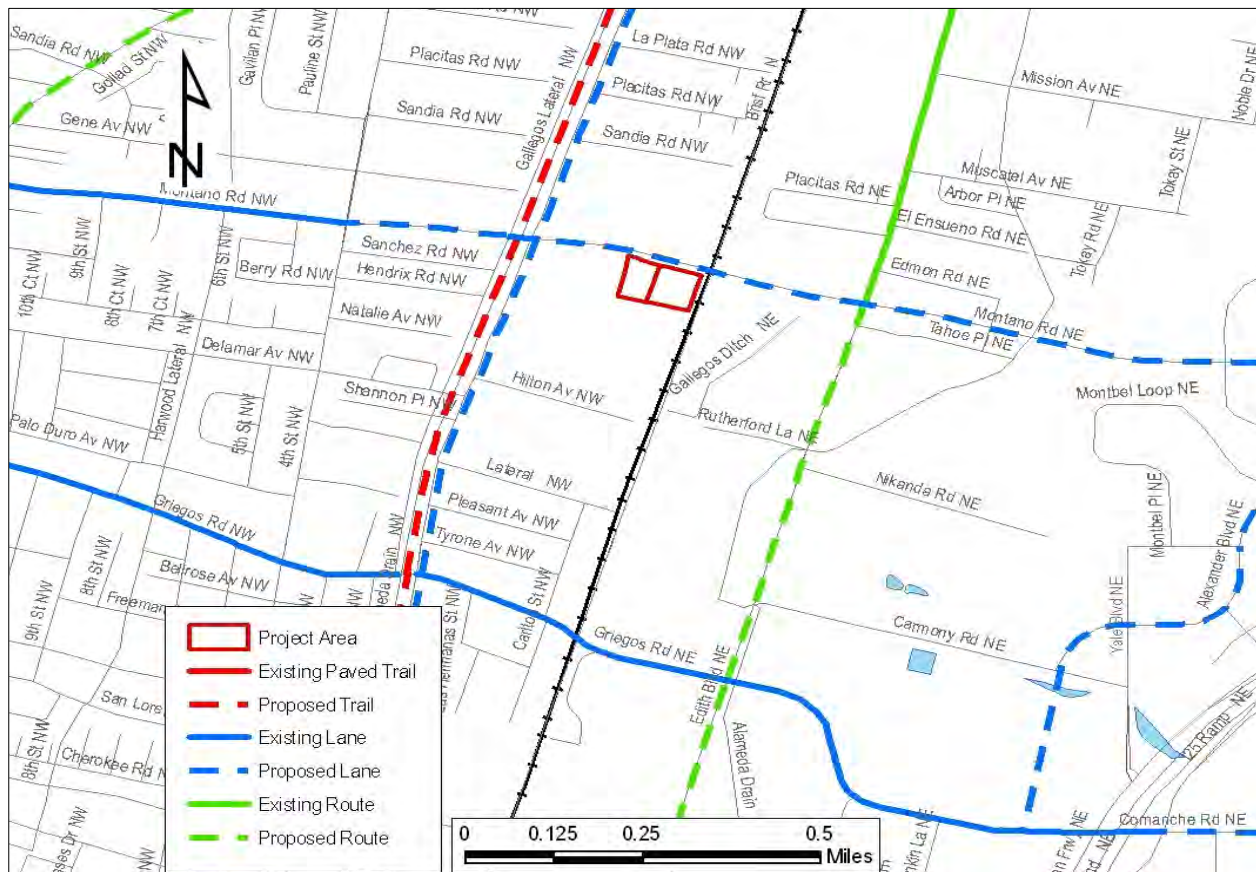


Figure 15: Bicycle Facilities

Current City of Albuquerque transit data were obtained from the city's GIS web site. The city's transit options in the vicinity of the project area include regular bus service only – no Rapid Ride routes pass by the proposed station. Route 157 - Montañito to Uptown - passes the station and continues east and west along Montañito Road. Stops for Route 157 are located just east of 2nd Street – less than 1,000 feet from the station entrance. Route 10 – N. Fourth St. – follows 4th Street, but makes a loop along Montañito Road to 2nd Street, down to Griegos, and then returns to 4th Street. Bus stops for Route 10 are located primarily along 4th Street, but several stops along 2nd Street provide access to Route 10 also. Route 13 is a commuter/peak hour route that travels along Comanche/Griegos Road; bus stops for this route are located along Griegos Road. These bus routes are shown in Figure 16.

Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not affect existing or proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities. However, the No-Action Alternative would not provide additional bicycle or pedestrian facilities and would not enhance the overall bicycle/pedestrian network.

The Build Alternative would not adversely impact bicycle facilities - no facilities are located within the project area. This alternative would include a trail connection for pedestrians and bicyclists that would extend from the west side of the park-and-ride lot to 2nd Street.

Safety conflicts could result from the Build Alternative if an option is implemented that does not include on-site bus access. Train users that travel to the proposed station via bus would be dropped off on Montañito Road. Bus riders arriving from the east would be dropped off on the north side of Montañito Road, therefore requiring that they cross Montañito Road to access the train station. If a traffic signal is not installed at the station access driveway (see discussion in Section 2), pedestrians using the westbound bus routes on Montañito Road would have to cross a 6-lane roadway without any crossing protection. With the installation of a traffic signal, which is proposed, no impacts of this type are anticipated.

Short-term impacts that occur during construction would temporarily impact pedestrians as modifications to the sidewalks along Montañito Road and construction of bus bays are implemented. However, once completed, the project is expected to result in improvements to the existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the area.

3.8 Threatened and Endangered Species

Databases maintained by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) were reviewed to identify the potential for special status species within the project area. In addition, field surveys of the project area were conducted in September and October 2009.

Existing Conditions

The proposed project site is highly disturbed, with large patches of bare soil and scattered patches of weedy and introduced species, characteristic of highly disturbed soils (see Figure 17). A list of the plant species encountered on the site is included below. Introduced species are indicated by [INT]. Two noxious weed species were observed, both of which are Class C and do not require mitigation.

- Slim amaranth (*Amaranthus hybridus*)
- Feather fingergrass (*Chloris virgata*)

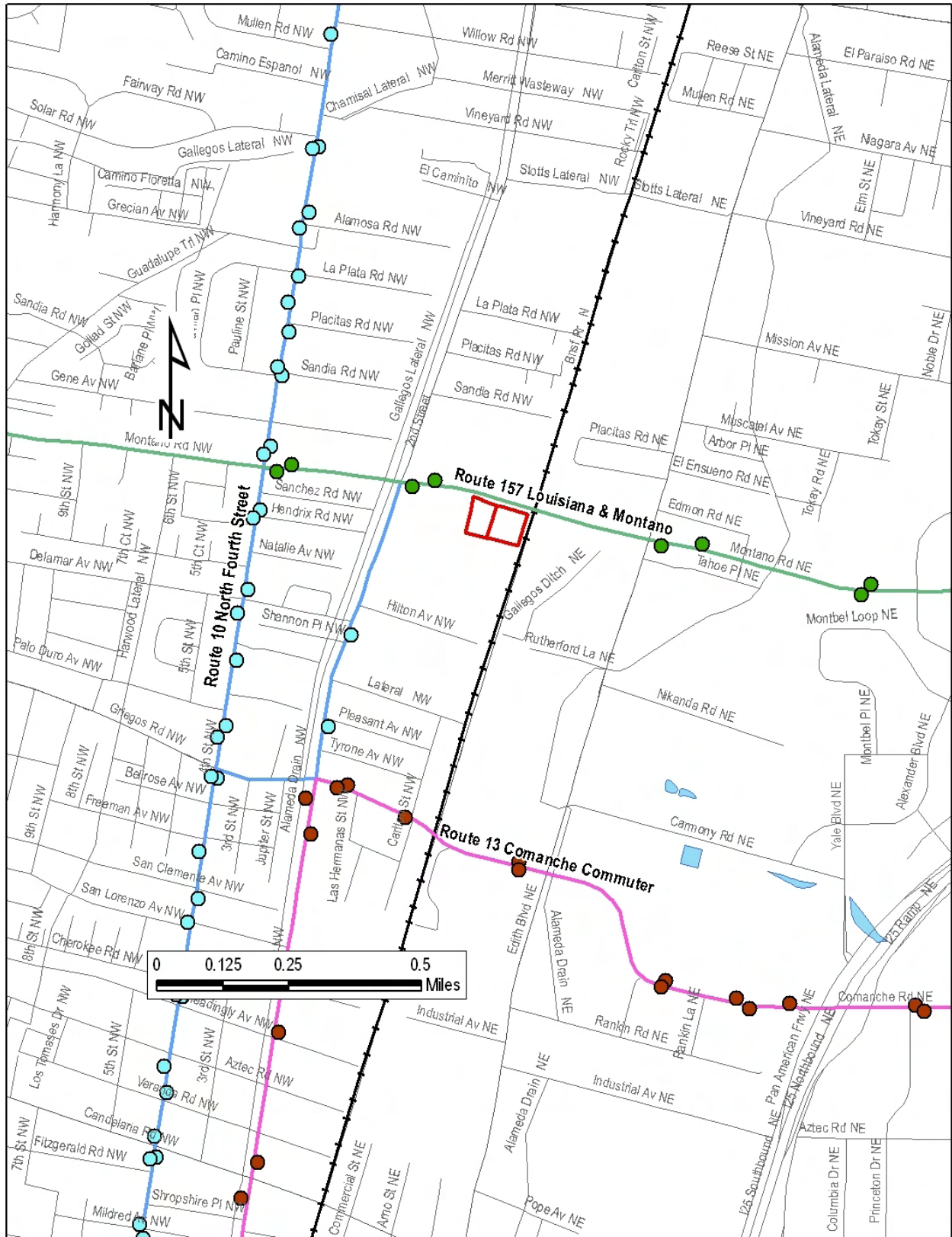


Figure 16: Bus Routes



Figure 17: Existing Vegetation (site overview looking east)

- Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) – Class C noxious weed
- Scarlet beeblossom (*Gaura coccinea*)
- Kochia (*Kochia scoparia*)
- Prickly Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*)
- London rocket (*Sisymbrium irio*)
- Silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*)
- Sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*)
- Puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*)
- Siberian Elm (*Ulmus pumila*) – Class C noxious weed

Very little suitable habitat exists for wildlife within the project area. The only wildlife encountered on the site included mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*) and invertebrates (grasshoppers, ants, wasps, and hairstreak butterflies). No nests or signs of other wildlife were found during site visits. No species with federal agency status were identified within the area proposed for use as a station and park-and-ride lot.

Impacts

The No Action Alternative would not impact any threatened or endangered species.

The Build Alternative would not affect threatened or endangered species. Vegetation on the site is limited to weedy species indicative of poor soils and prior surface disturbance. The scant cover and plant types provide little value to wildlife for foraging or cover. Evidence of wildlife use was not observed during surveys of the property. A survey of the proposed station site did not identify habitat used by any threatened or endangered species, nor were any plant or animals observed that are included in the federal or state list of threatened and endangered species.

Coordination with the US Fish & Wildlife Service was conducted as part of the investigations. Correspondence with this agency is included in Appendix 1.

3.9 Waters of the United States and Jurisdictional Wetlands

Surface water features are assessed to identify water resources within the vicinity of a proposed project and to determine the potential for disturbance that would result from project implementation. Transportation improvement projects can affect water resources directly as a result of physical changes to waterways and indirectly through degradation of water quality through increased sediment loading or introduction of pollutants into a water body.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is the guiding regulation for protection of surface water and applies to all waters of the United States, which are defined as navigable waters, interstate and intrastate waters, and territorial seas, impoundments of and tributaries to these waters, and associated wetlands. The objective of the water quality analysis is to provide input into the project decision process so that waters of the US within the project area are identified and evaluated, and appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are incorporated into project design. The analysis is required for compliance with permitting requirements pursuant to Clean Water Act Sections 401 (water quality certification), 402 (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, or NPDES) and 404 (dredge and fill).

Existing Conditions

The presence of surface waters within the project area was determined using USGS topographic maps and field reconnaissance. There are no perennial streams and no waters of the US within the project area. Flood control and irrigation facilities managed by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) are nearby but are not within the project area. The MRGCD provides and maintains flood protection, river control, drainage, and water storage for supplementing irrigation needs, and constructs and maintains distribution systems for irrigation.

Existing surface waters within the project vicinity are illustrated in Figure 18. The Alameda Lateral lies east of (up gradient of) the project area, and the Alameda Drain lies west of and down gradient to the project area. Both water features are soft-channel facilities and are part of the MRGCD flood control system. The Alameda Drain captures groundwater within the Rio Grande floodplain and funnels it into the MRGCD flood control system, namely the Albuquerque Riverside Drain that parallels the Rio Grande. The Gallegos Lateral is just west of and parallel to the Alameda Drain. The Gallegos Lateral is an irrigation facility that supplies water to farmlands in the north valley and is also managed by the MRGCD. The Montaña/Griegos Storm Drain, maintained by the COA, collects storm water runoff from streets in the project area and carries it to the Alameda Drain.

Field reconnaissance determined that no wetlands are located within the project area. None of the three factors that indicate wetlands were present at the project site.

Impacts

The effect of project alternatives on surface waters was assessed based on changes to the physical characteristics of the drainage facilities within the project area, increased water runoff, and other alterations that could affect surface water features. The findings of the analysis are described below for each alternative.

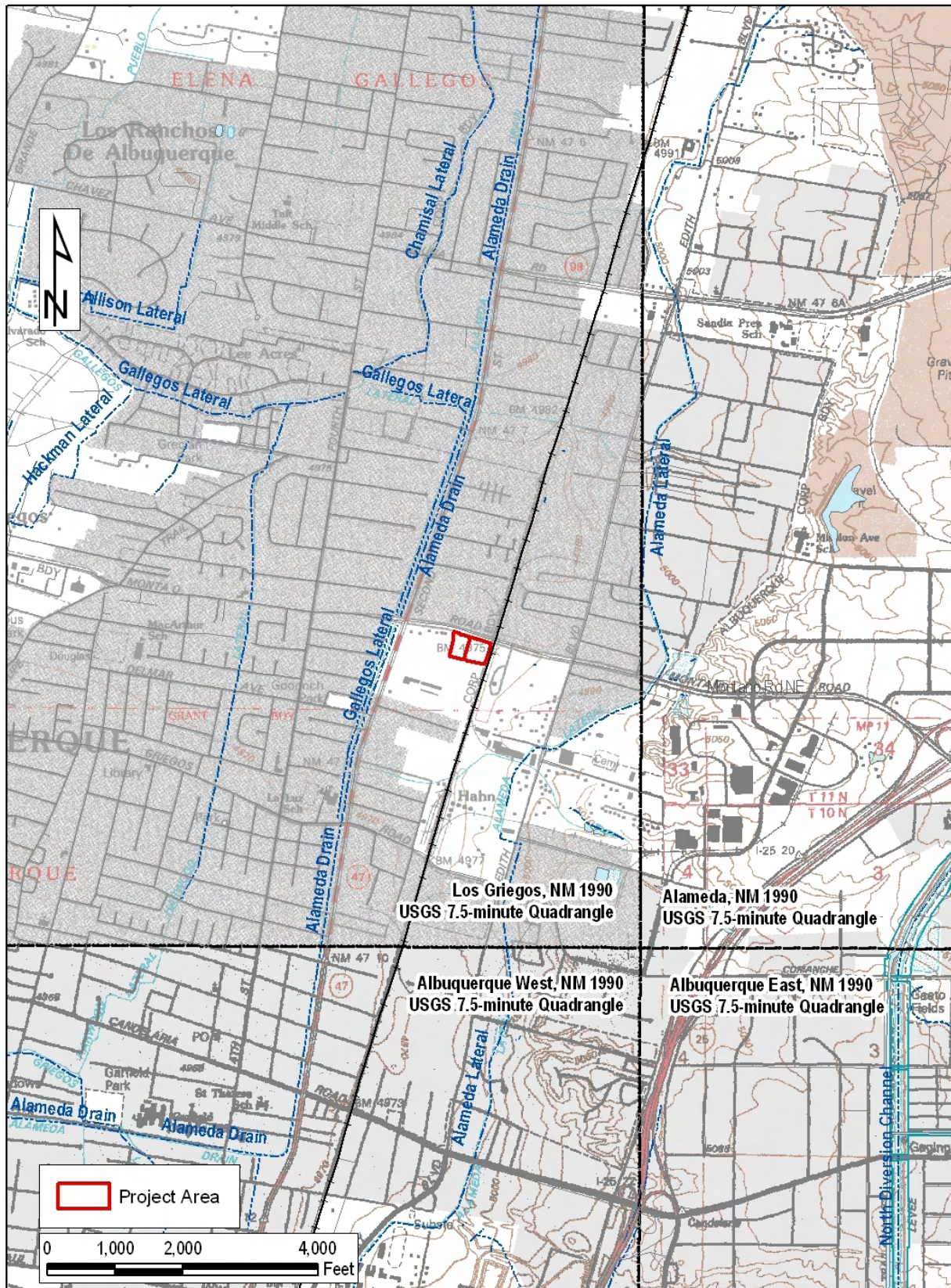


Figure 18: Surface Water

The No-Action Alternative would not have an adverse effect on any of the water features within the project area. Changes in run-off and drainage patterns would not occur.

No significant impacts to surface water quality are anticipated as a result of the proposed project. All of the build alternative options would result in a greater area of surface pavement than the No-Action Alternative. The area to be paved (including the parking lot, the station platform, and bus bays/sidewalks) is about 3 acres. Consequently, storm water runoff would increase. The site would be graded so that storm water runoff would drain to the southwest corner of the site. Runoff would be collected and then piped north to the existing Montaña/Griegos Storm Drain. The site is currently a vacant lot with little to no vegetation present, and therefore, experiences erosion that may be detrimental to surface water quality. While increased pavement would increase runoff, the existing surface water controls (i.e., the storm drain) would collect and treat the runoff to prevent water quality degradation. The use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction will effectively minimize the short-term construction impacts.

Coordination with the USACE indicated that no jurisdictional waters would be affected by the proposed undertaking. Therefore, a Section 404 permit is not required. Thus, Section 401 certification (water quality certification) is also not required. Because the roadway adjacent to the proposed project site is served by storm sewer, compliance with Section 402 (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) will be required and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan must be prepared and implemented prior to the start of construction. Correspondence with USACE is included in Appendix 1.

3.10 Floodplains

Floodplains are defined as the land area immediately adjacent to an active stream channel that becomes inundated at high flows. Typically, discussion and analysis of floodplains reference the “100-year” floodplain. The 100-year floodplain includes the land area that is inundated by flows that have a 1% probability of occurring in any given year. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) program that delineates the 100-year flood hazard areas of the United States.

Executive Order No. 11988 requires federal agencies to consider the potential effects of actions it may take in a floodplain and to avoid adversely impacting floodplains wherever possible. Construction and maintenance of stream crossings in transportation corridors can adversely affect the function of floodplains through the placement of fill across a floodplain and result in detrimental effects to nearby land uses and structures.

Existing Conditions

Floodplains within the project area were determined using the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map Database (DFIRM) prepared by FEMA. A review of the DFIRM data indicates that there are several floodplain zones within the project vicinity (see Figure 19).

The proposed project is located within Zone X Protected by Levee — the floodplain of the Rio Grande. This designation indicates that this area is protected from the 100-year flood by levees (MRGCD flood control facilities discussed in the preceding section). Zone AH lies just east of the project area and the railroad tracks. This zone is an area where base flood elevations have been determined, and flood depths of 1 to 3 feet occur during the 100-year flood (which are usually areas of ponding). Areas east of the railroad track are in Zone X, which is outside of any special flood hazard areas.

Impacts

No impacts to floodplains are anticipated as a result of either the No-Action Alternative or the Build Alternative options. The proposed project will not change the elevation of the area, nor will it induce incompatible development.

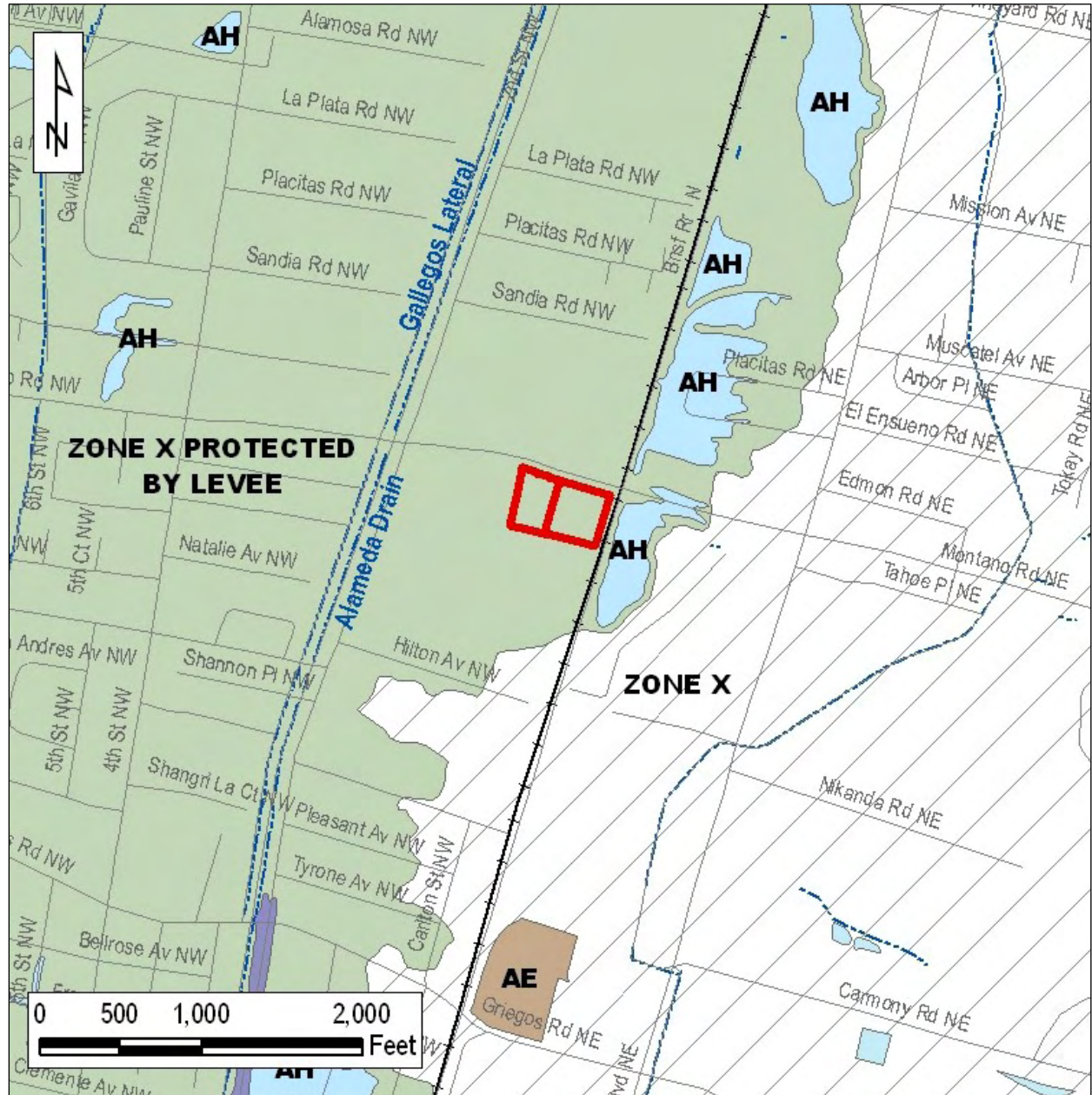


Figure 19: Floodplains

3.11 Cultural Resources

The presence of cultural resources was investigated based on a review of records maintained by the New Mexico Cultural Resource Inventory System (NMCRIS) map server, topographic maps, physical site files, and a field survey. These searches were performed to identify any previous surveys and previously recorded cultural properties in the project area and to develop expectations for the number and type of sites likely to be found in the project area. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the New

Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties (NMSCR) were also checked to determine the presence of any listed historic properties in the project area. Both the station site and a 500-meter buffer around the station site were investigated for previously recorded sites, properties, and surveys. These checks were conducted in July 2009.

The records review was followed by a 100-percent pedestrian field survey conducted on July 29, 2009. The objective of the fieldwork portion of the project was to identify and document all physical evidence of prehistoric and historic cultural activities within the area of potential effect (APE). The field survey and site recording activities included all 5.69 acres of the proposed site. All buildings and structures within 100 feet of the proposed construction area were recorded.

Existing Conditions

Results of the records searches and field survey did not identify any cultural resources within the area proposed for the Montaña Station or its ancillary facilities (parking lot, sidewalks, pedestrian trail, etc.). The NMDOT (formerly AT&SF) railroad is an historic resource. However, it is an in-use facility and the proposed station is consistent with its historic use as a transportation facility. The proposed undertaking will have no effect on this property, and no additional investigations are recommended.

A complete copy of the Cultural Resources report is on file with the NMDOT. The NMDOT Cultural Resources Bureau confirmed that the report meets the requirements for programmatic clearance under the Programmatic Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and cultural resource clearance has been given for the project. Correspondence with the NMDOT Cultural Resources Bureau is included in Appendix 1.

Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not affect cultural resources.

No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated as a result of the proposed project. None of the build alternative options would affect cultural resources. If cultural resources are discovered during construction, work will be halted and the NMDOT Project Manager and the SHPO will be notified to determine the appropriate course of action.

3.12 Hazardous Materials

An Initial Site Assessment (ISA) of the proposed Montaña Station site was prepared in December 2009. The purpose of the ISA is to identify recognized environmental conditions (RECs) and to investigate those sites within the study area that currently have or historically have had the potential to impact the subject property adversely through releases of hazardous substances to the surface, subsurface, or groundwater. The ISA is the first step in investigating releases of potentially hazardous substances. ISAs are intended to determine whether sufficient risk exists to warrant further, more rigorous (intrusive) investigation, such as a Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI). The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) defines RECs as “the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products on a property under conditions that indicate an existing release, a past release, or a material threat of a release of any hazardous substance or petroleum products in to structures on the property or into the ground, groundwater, or surface water of the property.”

Existing Conditions

Several nearby properties were identified in the environmental database report as either Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, Underground Storage Tank (UST) sites, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) generator sites, or State Cleanup Sites. However, the potential for adverse impacts to the subject property is not significant due to the following factors:

- The “no further action required” status of all but two of the Leaking Underground Storage Tank and State Cleanup Sites;
- The groundwater conditions do not support adverse impacts (65 feet below ground surface with flow to the southeast); and
- The apparent down gradient or cross gradient locations of the active release sites with respect to the subject property.

The ISA did not reveal any evidence of RECs on the subject property. Though not considered an REC, historic aerial photographs and historical topographic maps indicate that a residential structure used to exist on the subject property, and it is possible that a residential structure would have used an onsite septic system. There is no documentation of such a system, but the possibility exists that a system may remain on the subject property. If encountered during site development, the septic system would be closed and abandoned in accordance with the applicable New Mexico regulations.

Recognized environmental conditions do not include de minimis conditions, which “generally do not present a threat to human health or the environment and that generally would not be the subject of an enforcement action if brought to the attention of appropriate governmental agencies.” De minimis conditions were observed at the subject property in the form of windblown paper debris. This condition will not result in significant impacts to soil or groundwater, and further action is not recommended.

Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not affect hazardous materials that may occur on the proposed construction site.

No impacts from hazardous materials are anticipated in the implementation of the proposed project. Construction of the proposed boarding platform would involve the construction of concrete footings that are likely to extend to depths of about 3- to 4-feet below grade. The relatively shallow depth of the footings, the depth and direction of groundwater flow, and the distance and direction from the contaminated properties discussed above indicate a low likelihood of encountering soils contaminated by hazardous materials. Correspondence from the NMDOT Environmental Geology Bureau regarding the ISA is provided in Appendix 1.

In the event that hazardous materials are identified, all work would stop and the project manager would be notified. Any hazardous materials that are identified will be removed and transported to an appropriate facility so that the public and construction workers are not exposed to hazards.

3.13 Visual Impacts

Visual resources are defined by FHWA as those physical features that constitute the visible landscape and elements within an area that provide unique and interesting views to residents, visitors, and others who may traverse the area.

Existing Conditions

The visual environment near the proposed station site consists primarily of foreground (within ¼ mile) and middle ground (¼ mile to 5 miles) views of commercial and government buildings. The Sandia Mountains are visible as a scenic background view (beyond 5 miles) from the project area, but the view is interrupted by billboards, the existing rail-crossing, and city buildings.

Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not impact the visual quality of the project area.

No impacts to visual quality are anticipated as a result of the proposed project. The build alternative options would include the construction of a boarding platform, passenger amenities including a canopy, seating, and information kiosk, and a park-and-ride lot for approximately 100-200 vehicles. Given the urban, industrial nature of the area surrounding the project site, the addition of the proposed rail station would be a new visual element; however, it would not create a visual intrusion or have a significant impact on the background view. The station is not in the line of site of nearby residential properties and would only be visible from surrounding commercial and government buildings and from cars driving along Montaña Road. Lighting of the parking area and boarding platform is included as a security measure at all Rail Runner stations. Night-sky compliant lighting would be used to prevent light intrusion at nearby properties. The parking area would also include landscaping with drought-tolerant species.

3.14 Construction Impacts

Construction of the build alternatives would have short-term impacts to the public and nearby property owners as a result of construction activities. Construction impacts would be short-term in duration and are an unavoidable consequence of construction.

Construction impacts would include temporary delays and disruption of travel on Montaña Road, as well as a short-term increase in fugitive dust and mobile-source emissions during construction. Fugitive dust is airborne particulate matter, generally of a relatively large particulate size. Construction-related fugitive dust would be generated by wind-borne erosion of graded areas, haul trucks, concrete trucks, delivery trucks, and earth-moving vehicles operating around the construction sites. This fugitive dust would be caused by particulate matter that is disturbed by vehicle movement over paved and unpaved roads, dirt tracked onto paved surfaces from unpaved areas at access points, and material blown from uncovered haul trucks and graded areas. Mitigation measures to reduce short-term construction impacts are included as environmental commitments to be upheld by the contractor.

3.15 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts include impacts of a proposed project when considered collectively with the impacts of other recent past, present, and foreseeable future actions having a relationship to the proposed project. Cumulative impacts to rail operations could result from the construction of additional rail stations in the future.

One potential cumulative impact was identified. This impact is the increase in travel time for the overall Rail Runner that would occur as a consequence of the proposed station at Montaña Road together with other stations that have been added to the route. Currently, eleven stations are open for use between Belen and Santa Fe. Two other stations are scheduled for opening within the next year and are located at Santo Domingo Pueblo and Sandia Pueblo.

The additional stations would increase the time of travel for some train riders. Currently, the length of time that trains are stopped at stations varies from less than 1 minute up to 2 or 3 minutes. The longer dwell, or stopped, times generally occur when trains are ahead of schedule and they remain at the station to avoid early departure from the scheduled time. In addition to the time spent at the station, some time is added to each stop to allow for trains to decelerate and accelerate as they approach and depart the station.

The travel time for the Rail Runner service from the Downtown Albuquerque station to the Santa Fe South Capitol station is approximately 84 minutes for trains that do not stop at the Downtown Bernalillo station and approximately 91 minutes for trains that do stop at the Downtown Bernalillo station. As more stations are added, travel time would increase. Assuming an average stopped time of 60 to 90 seconds, and an additional 30 seconds to account for train deceleration, docking, and accelerating back to cruise speed, each additional station would add 1.5 minutes to 2 minutes to the overall travel time for riders traveling between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Thus, the travel time for trains starting at Downtown Albuquerque to the Santa Fe South Capitol Station would increase from 84 minutes to 88.5 - 90 minutes (95.5 – 97 minutes for trains that stop at the station in Downtown Bernalillo).

According to travel times estimated by the MRCOG, by 2025 the travel time for auto trips that originate in Downtown Albuquerque and destined to the South Capitol area of Santa Fe is estimated to take approximately 115 minutes. Thus, even with three additional stations, train travel time would remain significantly less than auto travel.

No other cumulative impacts have been identified for the proposed project.

3.16 Indirect Impacts

Indirect impacts are project effects that occur later in time or away from the immediate project area. Indirect impacts could result from any development which might occur in the future around the proposed station, particularly in the adjacent lot that is privately owned. If such development occurs, it would be minimal and would likely have a positive economic impact on the surrounding communities.

An additional indirect impact would be the increase in paved surface area which increases storm water runoff and blocks ground water recharge. However, the area is urban, and storm drains and adequate controls are in place to protect surface water quality. The storm water runoff from the paved area – about 3 acres – would be gathered at the southwest corner of the site and piped to the existing Montañó/Griegos storm drain. No adverse indirect impacts to water quality are anticipated.

3.17 Environmental Commitments

Significant impacts have not been identified for the proposed project. Adverse impacts that result from the proposed project will be mitigated as appropriate and feasible. Mitigation measures that will be implemented as part of the proposed project are listed below. These commitments are legally binding and are a component of the overall project.

- NMDOT Standard Specifications for Highway and Bridge Construction (latest edition) specific to the following standard mitigation requirements including:
 - The implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in accordance with NPDES regulations;
 - Minimization of soil disturbance and erosion control;

- The requirement to stop work if previously unknown hazardous materials are encountered. In this event, the NMDOT Project Manager and the NMDOT Environmental Geology Bureau Program Manager will be contacted;
 - Implementation of standard air quality and dust control abatement measures during construction; and,
 - Implementation of noise abatement measures for construction equipment.
- In the event that cultural resources are discovered during construction, work will halt and the NMDOT Project Manager, NMDOT Cultural Resources Program Manager, and the HPD will be contacted to determine an appropriate course of action.
 - An aesthetic theme for the station will be developed in collaboration with the surrounding communities.
 - Night sky compliant lighting will be used to prevent light intrusion at nearby residential properties.
 - All vegetation used to landscape the site will be low-water use and drought-tolerant.
 - Access to the proposed site will be controlled by a traffic signal. The traffic signal will be coordinated with the signals on 2nd Street, Edith Boulevard, and the Railroad signal (to clear the tracks prior to train arrival).
 - The westbound bus stop should be located west of the site access driveway if buses do not enter the station site. This measure is intended to promote pedestrian use of the signalized crosswalks at the intersection and to discourage crossing east of the signal.
 - The westbound left-turn lane will be reconstructed to provide the maximum length possible to increase the storage capacity for vehicles entering the site.
 - Rail Runner trains will be required to stop outside (south) of the Montaña Road right-of-way so that the railroad gates may be raised after it passes or during its dwell time to allow traffic operations to continue until the train starts moving again.

3.18 Conclusion

The assessment of the proposed station did not identify any significant impacts. Thus, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not needed. Unless compelling information is received from review agencies and/or the public after the circulation of this Environmental Assessment, the EA will be concluded with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the proposed project. The FONSI would authorize the final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of the proposed project.

4.0 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Agency coordination and public involvement were an integral part of the analyses of the proposed project. Input from agency and public stakeholders was used as part of the needs assessment, alternatives development, and issues identification processes. Agency coordination and public involvement activities conducted for the Montaña Station project are summarized below.

4.1 Agency Coordination

Coordination with agencies having an interest in the proposed project was achieved using two methods. The first was meetings held with agencies and jurisdictions responsible for land use planning and zoning, traffic engineering, transit operations, and roadway infrastructure within the project area. In addition, agencies with property and/or facilities that could be affected by the proposed station were also invited to participate in project meetings. The agencies invited to these meetings included the City of Albuquerque Planning, Transit, Municipal Development, and Police Departments, the Albuquerque City Council, Bernalillo County Planning and Public Works Departments, and the Village of Los Ranchos Planning and Zoning Department. The meetings with these entities included group meetings to discuss the proposed undertaking and, for some agencies, individual meetings to discuss specific topics of interest.

In addition to the above, correspondence was sent to the above agencies and the various resource agencies having potential interest in the proposed station. The correspondence consisted of letters that provided background information about the project and invited their input to assist in project scoping and on jurisdictional issues of interest. The agencies receiving scoping letters and their jurisdictional responsibility include:

- US Army Corps of Engineers – water quality and permitting
- US Fish and Wildlife Service – threatened and endangered species
- New Mexico Environment Department – hazardous waste and water quality certification
- New Mexico Department of Transportation – environmental certification and railway right-of-way
- City of Albuquerque Transit – bus transit service
- City of Albuquerque Police – property and buildings adjacent to the project area
- City of Albuquerque Planning – land use and zoning
- City of Albuquerque Municipal Development Departments – traffic and roadway engineering
- Albuquerque City Council – special planning studies
- Bernalillo County Planning Department – land use and zoning
- Bernalillo County Public Works Departments – traffic and roadway engineering
- Village of Los Ranchos Planning and Zoning Department – land use and zoning

The US Army Corps of Engineers responded to the scoping request and stated that no jurisdictional waters would be affected by the proposed action and that further coordination was not required. The US Fish and Wildlife Service also responded to the scoping request.

The above agencies and jurisdictions will be notified of the EA availability and offered an opportunity to review and comment on the environmental document. Copies of coordination letters and responses received are included in Appendix 1.

4.2 Public Involvement

Public involvement with stakeholders having a potential interest in the project was also undertaken during project development. Stakeholders for the project include area residents, business owners and employees, commuters, and others with an interest in the project area. A public meeting was held on December 15, 2009. The meeting was held in the evening hours from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information about the project to stakeholders and to seek their input on issues and concerns. The meeting was held at the Los Griegos Health & Social Services Center at 12th Street and Candelaria Road. Information about the proposed new station and park-and-ride lot, station features, the project background, the need for the station, and three alternative station concepts was presented. A question and answer period and discussion with project team members followed the presentation. Thirty-four individuals attended the meeting and included area residents, business owners, commuters who use the Rail Runner, representatives from neighborhood associations, and representatives from city agencies interested in the project.

Notification of the meeting occurred through an advertisement placed in *The Sunday Journal* on December 6, 2009, and flyers e-mailed to the project contact list and posted at Rail Runner station kiosks. Letters were also mailed to businesses and residences located near the proposed station. The letters provided notification that an EA was being prepared and a public involvement meeting would be held where they could provide input about the project. Notices for the public meeting are included in Appendix 2.

Overall, the public was supportive of the proposed station. Comments received generally referred to traffic issues/concerns surrounding the site; transit-oriented development opportunities; safer bicycle and pedestrian access; station amenities; multi-modal coordination; and impact to the overall Rail Runner system schedule. Two comments stated preference for Option 2 (Enhanced Transit), while one preferred Option 3 (Intermodal Station). The different Build Alternative options are outlined in Section 2 of this document. While some of the public comments are outside the scope of this project, most of the comments and concerns are addressed in Sections 2 and 3 of this document.

Coordination with agencies and stakeholders will be on-going. Availability of the EA will be published in the local newspaper. Copies of the EA will be mailed to resource agencies and made available to other agencies. A public hearing will be held no sooner than 15 days after the EA is published and distributed. Public notice for the hearing will be published in the local newspaper and e-mailed to the project contact list. The comment period will continue for two weeks after the hearing. An Input Synopsis that summarizes the public hearing, comments received, responses to comments, changes to the proposed project needed in response to agency and public comments, and other information, as pertinent, will be prepared.

Significant impacts were not identified for the proposed project. Unless compelling information is received from review agencies and/or the public after the circulation of this EA, the MRCOG will request that the NMDOT issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the proposed project. The FONSI would authorize construction of the station and park-and-ride lot.