



Decision Document for the Montañ​o Rail Runner Station

Proposed by the Mid-Region Council of Governments in Cooperation with the New Mexico Department of Transportation

Project and Control Number TA00070; MPO Project Identification Number 423

This Environmental Decision document approves the selection of the preferred alternative for a new Rail Runner station located along Montañ​o Road near 2nd Street (Federal and State Project Identification Number TA00070, MPO Project Number 423) in the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico (see Figure 1). The selected alternative is as described in the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) in cooperation with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT). The Environmental Decision is based on the following information: (1) the EA issued on April 19, 2010; (2) comments on the EA received from agency and public stakeholders, as documented in the Project Input Synopsis; and, (3) additional input from and consultation with regulatory agencies and adjacent land owners and businesses.

The New Mexico Rail Runner Montañ​o Station project is a cooperative effort involving MRCOG and 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 Regional Transit District through an agreement with the NMDOT.

The environmental assessment and all related activities were conducted following the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the requirements of NMDOT's *Location Study Procedures*. Other related federal and state laws, policies, and procedures pertaining to environmental protection and public involvement were also followed. Background information pertinent to the decision is provided in the remainder of this document, including: (1) the alternative selected by the MRCOG and the NMDOT and the basis for its selection; (2) a brief discussion of all alternatives considered; and (3) the commitments made by MRCOG and the NMDOT to avoid or minimize environmental impacts and the measures to mitigate and compensate for impacts that are unavoidable. Additional and more detailed information about the project is provided in the EA and other supporting technical reports prepared as part of the project.

Funds to complete the planning phase for the proposed project were 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 phase one of this project to include planning, design, and property acquisition for the proposed station.

Design and construction of the proposed station is estimated at approximately \$3.9 Million (2010 dollars). This estimate includes costs of construction, equipment, taxes, and contingency. Funds to construct the proposed station have not yet been secured, although application for a Bus and Bus Livability Program grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has been made. If federal funds from the FTA grant program are obtained, authorization to use these funds would require revisions to the EA prepared for this project and a FONSI signed by FTA.

Selected Alternative

The MRCOG has selected the Build Alternative Option 2 for implementation. The design of the station and park-and-ride lot would be consistent with and similar to other Rail Runner stations within



Figure 1: Project Area

the Albuquerque metropolitan area. The major design features of the Build Alternative Option 2 passenger station and parking lot include:

- A passenger boarding platform approximately 500 feet in length and 18-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 Montañó 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 140 vehicles. The lot would be equipped with night-sky compliant lighting, security cameras, and an emergency telephone. Primary access to the station is by automobile. Secondary access to the station is provided by transit routes operating on Montañó Road. 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.
 - On-site bus access and circulation is provided. A bus lane to drop off and pick up passengers is provided adjacent to the boarding platform. The addition of on-site bus lanes reduces the area available for on-site parking.
 - 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.

The selection of the Build Alternative Option 2 is based on the following:

1. The need to improve access to the NM Rail Runner service. The area within Albuquerque north of Downtown is served by a single station at El Pueblo Road in the North Valley. 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 using a multi-level parking structure. The combination of accessibility constraints and limited parking capacity hinders the use of the El Pueblo Station.

According to analysis conducted for the EA, approximately 275,000 people reside within a 20-minute travel time to the Montañó Station site. 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.

2. The environmental investigations and consultation with stakeholder agencies conducted for the EA did not identify any significant impacts to the human or natural environment that would result from implementation of this project.
3. Compelling information from agencies and the public that would change the findings and conclusions of the EA was not received during the EA review and comment period. Public involvement and agency coordination was conducted in accordance with state and federal regulations and policies. The EA was made available to the general public and to all stakeholder agencies, and a public hearing was held to provide an additional opportunity for public review and comment.

Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

Activities to inform the general public and stakeholder agencies of the proposed project and involve them in project decisions occurred early and continuously during the environmental and engineering investigations and analyses. A listing of primary public involvement and agency coordination major activities included those listed below. A detailed description of these activities is provided in the Input Synopsis on file with the NMDOT and MRCOG.

- Meetings with stakeholder agencies and jurisdictions.
- Correspondence sent to the stakeholder agencies and resource agencies that have a potential interest in the proposed project. This correspondence provided background information about the project and invited input to assist in project scoping and jurisdictional issues of interest.
- A public scoping and information meeting held on December 15, 2009.
- A public hearing held on May 6, 2010.
- Meetings with individual landowners and businesses.

Comments from stakeholder agencies and the general public were generally supportive of the proposed project. Substantive questions about and concerns with the proposed project were limited to the effects of station-generated traffic on Montaña Road. In addition, the operators of a warehouse property immediately north of the project site expressed concerns with the potential for the proposed project to impact ingress and egress at their driveways. Analysis of the effects of the proposed project on these issues did not identify impacts to either Montaña Road operations or the operations at the warehouse driveways.

Environmental Commitments

Significant impacts have not been identified for the proposed project. Commitments 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;

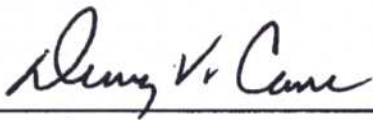
- The requirement to stop work if previously unknown hazardous materials are encountered. In this event, the NMDOT Project Manager and the NMDOT Environmental Geology Bureau Program Manager will be contacted;
 - Implementation of standard air quality and dust control abatement measures during construction; 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.
 - 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.

Findings and Decision

Based on the EA, the Project Input Synopsis, additional input from and consultation with regulatory agencies, adjacent land owners, and businesses, and other information in the record for the Rail Runner project, the MRCOG concludes that the proposed action:

1. satisfies the identified need for improved access to the New Mexico Rail Runner and is a suitable site for a commuter rail station;
2. was conducted in accordance with applicable federal and state transportation planning rules and procedures and with extensive public input and agency involvement; and
3. includes measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for social, economic, and environmental impacts.

The analyses conducted for the EA and subsequent comments by agencies and the public did not identify significant impacts that would result from implementation of the build alternative. Based on these findings, the New Mexico Rail Runner Montañño Station project is approved by the NMDOT and the MRCOG, and the project is authorized to proceed with phase one: preliminary engineering, final design, and right-of-way acquisition.



Dewey Cave
Executive Director, Mid-Region Council of Governments

7-27-10

Date



Colleen Vaughn
Acting NMDOT Environmental Program Manager

8-11-10

Date