

Governor's capital outlay approval to fund major projects

Written by By Melinda Russell Sun Correspondent
Friday, 19 June 2015 05:02



LAS CRUCES – It was less than two weeks ago that state lawmakers met for one day to iron out their differences and present a capital outlay package to Gov. Susana Martinez. On June 17 she announced her approval of a lion's share of the statewide capital outlay requests during a press conference in Las Cruces.

In Senate Bill 1, all but three of McKinley County's 39 infrastructure projects were approved. Martinez vetoed \$1.1 million in line items statewide, which is less than 1 percent of the total requests of \$ 293.8 million.

"Far too many of our roads are dangerous, and they are in dire need of repair," Martinez stated, in a press release. "By signing this legislation, we will not only make our roads and highways safer for our families, but we will also create jobs and help lay the groundwork to continue growing our economy."

This bill gives McKinley County more than \$11 million for a slew of projects. Included in the list are utility upgrades, heavy construction equipment for road maintenance, senior citizen facility improvements, and more.

But the icing on the cake is the \$ 4.5 million in funding earmarked for the Allison Road bridge replacement. The project, slated to be done in phases, includes changes to increase safety, remedy physical deficiencies and increase the probability of economic development.

It's an interagency project of both the New Mexico Department of Transportation and the City of Gallup, funded by local, state and federal monies.

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The goal is to create a diamond shaped interchange that will connect Allison Road with Interstate 40.

It was good news to Gallup Mayor, Jackie McKinney, who said the funding for the Allison Bridge project came through in "one, fell swoop."

"It has been the #1 ICIP (Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan) priority for the city since the last administration," he said.

The new Allison Road is being positioned so it can connect to Coal Basin Road and Gamarco to the north and to Mendoza Road to the south.

The bill also includes \$125,000 for Carbon Coal Road improvements. Carbon Coal Road will eventually feed into the Allison Road interchange.

With these connections, congestion on Hwy. 491 could be reduced. Reduced congestion would reportedly benefit emergency service response and help to ease local traffic.

Rep. Patty Lundstrom, D-Gallup, who has pushed to move the Allison project forward, was predictably pleased with the governor's stamp of approval.

"The money is great for the projects, but it also helps the local economy immediately," she said. "All projects approved for capital outlay are required to be shovel ready."

In recent years, McKinley County has received between \$6 million to \$7 million in capital outlay funding.

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City Councilor Fran Palochak, whose district includes the Allison Road corridor, praised local lawmakers.

"I'm really excited and thrilled about it," she said. "I appreciate Representative Lundstrom's and Senator Munoz' efforts on this project and the governor's approval of this action. I think it is going to open up the west side."

Martinez will be in Gallup June 23 for the Allison Road groundbreaking ceremony.

McKinley County Manager Bill Lee said the millions of dollars in requests slated for allocation to the county will not only serve to improve and build needed infrastructure, but to also make it possible for the county to purchase heavy equipment for the roads department.

"I want to thank our legislators and the governor for working hard to come together and finding common ground during the special session that will prove to be a benefit to not only our county but the entire state," he said.