

2020-2045

# Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Plan

\*Unfinished Draft



Prepared by North Central New Mexico  
Economic Development District

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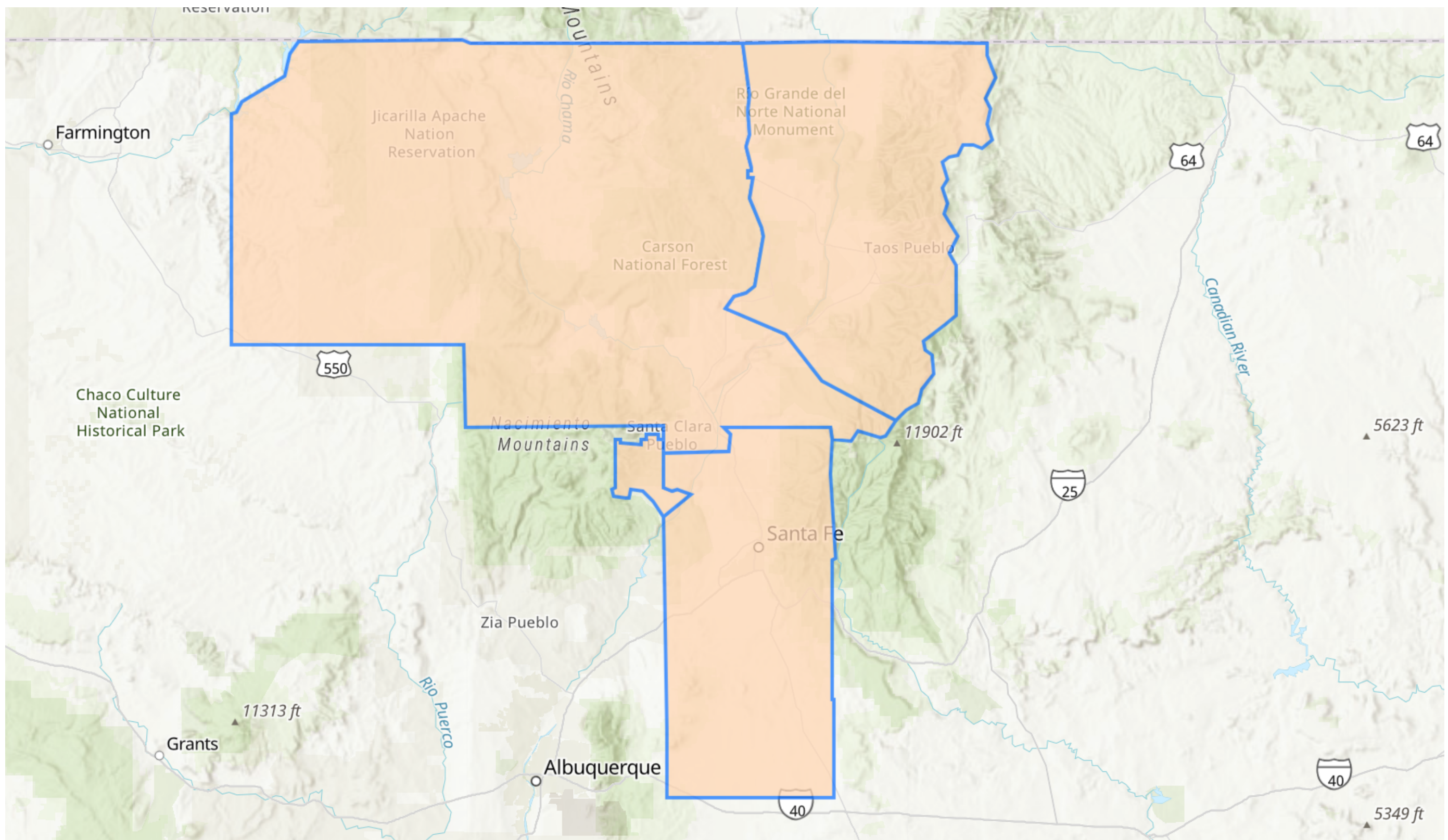
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# Introduction



## 1.1 Northern Pueblos Regional Overview

The Northern Pueblos region comprises of 4 counties: Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Taos, and Rio Arriba. This is a diverse region comprising of Native American tribes, historic Spanish land grant settlements, artist communities, outdoor recreation areas, and many more. Our region is often an intersection of these identities as seen in the architecture, ethnic and cultural diversity, art, and appreciation of the outdoors. Our counties contain nationally recognized art markets, world-class ski areas, and a beautiful high desert/rocky mountain landscape that attracts visitors from around the country and world. The I-25 connects the southern part of the region in Santa Fe to Albuquerque to the west and the north is heavily connected by a network of state and local roads, as well as served by the North Central Regional Transit District and the New Mexico Rail Runner Express.

Santa Fe, the state's capital, attracts many public sector and government employees, as well as seasonal and service jobs due to its large tourism market. Thousands are employed at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in the science and technology industry and thousands more as contractors and subcontractors to maintain its many facilities. For these reasons, many residents live in the more affordable rural areas and commute into these economic hubs for employment relying on the many state and local roads for their daily commutes. Despite the region's diversity and its ability to attract new residents from outside of the region, income inequality, an aging population, cultural displacement, affordable housing, and lack of non-seasonal year-round employment are all pressing issues facing the Northern Pueblos region.

Encouraging economic development opportunities in the more rural parts of the region and advocating for affordable housing where employment is concentrated will decrease vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improve our air quality, reduce congestion and traffic-related accidents and fatalities, and bring economic opportunity to those that need it the most.



## 1.2 What is an RTP?

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a living document that asks the questions: where has our region been, where is it now, and where do we want it to be in 25 years? The plan is informed by intensive data gathering and analysis, input from the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) Board, and a public input survey that asks residents within our region questions regarding the condition of their transportation system, access to amenities by various modes of transportation and where they want to see the biggest investments moving forward.

Combining data with public input will help designate a set of regional priorities, target areas for investments, and help guide the RTPO's rating and ranking process to put the needs of the residents at the forefront of planning decisions. Due to this plan being long-range in nature it will address concerns and necessities surrounding the environment, social equity, access to jobs and services, an aging population, and affordable housing and how these issues implicate transportation and mobility.

## 1.3 The Northern Pueblos RTPO

The Northern Pueblos RTPO (NPRTPO) encompasses approximately 10,083 square miles in Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, non-metro Santa Fe, and Taos Counties. NPRTPO is a voluntary association of local governments and the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) that provides a forum for members to meet, plan, and work together on issues related to transportation in the North Central New Mexico region. It is comprised of municipalities, counties, and tribes in the rural portion of the region and acts as the state-required Regional Transportation Planning Organization for the area. Its membership consists of elected officials and their designated alternates. Federal and state agencies with a responsibility for transportation planning and programs in the region are also represented in an advisory, non-voting capacity on the NPRTPO Joint Policy and Technical Committee.

The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NCNMEDD) is a regional planning organization that plans for the Northern Pueblos RTPO and North East RTPO as well as supports the region through economic development projects, loan and grant assistance, and support for aging through North Central EDD's Non-Metro Agency for Aging. The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District fully complies with **Title VI** of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For more information or to obtain a Title VI Complaint Form, please contact the NCNMEDD Title VI Coordinator, Monica Abeita by phone: 505- 395-2668 or by email: [monicaa@ncnmedd.com](mailto:monicaa@ncnmedd.com) or visit our website at [www.rtpnm.org](http://www.rtpnm.org) for additional information.

## 1.4 Why Mobility Matters

In a state that struggles with funding, high numbers of traffic fatalities and DWI incidents, poverty, and an aging population, the Northern Pueblos region must take into account these trends and issues and their implications for regional transportation planning. The Northern Pueblos RTPPO supports and advocates planning for the most vulnerable populations within our region, to improve road safety for all users, to address environmental concerns in our transportation sector, increase active transportation to improve public health and create a more connected and integrated region.

When we improve mobility for all users, we increase our region's access to goods, services, employment, and affordable housing. Active transportation means less congestion and traffic, and a more physically active population. 57% of survey-takers (111) selected "Not applicable" or "1 being unusable" on a scale from 1 to 5 in ranking the sidewalks in their communities and only 8% (12) ranked their sidewalks as 4 or 5 out of 5. 64% of survey-takers (124) selected Not Applicable or 1 for Bike lanes and bike paths and more survey takers selected "Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety" as a top 3 transportation-related challenge in their communities, than any other option.

### Social Equity

As housing costs increase throughout our region, specifically within our cultural centers and main streets, our long-term and lower to middle-income residents will have to look farther away for affordable housing. This will mean that our most cost burdened populations will have longer commutes and bear more car related expenses. Not only will this exacerbate income inequality within our region, but our cultural centers will increasingly cater to tourists and newcomers to our region. Physical and cultural displacement will continue if sound land use and transportation planning decisions are not made to preserve and create new affordable housing options within city and town centers and if multi-modal transportation options aren't made to connect surrounding neighborhoods to the amenities and services that exist in our downtowns. As our population continues to age, investing in alternative transportation options will also become a necessity.

### Land Use

Land use and zoning decisions dictate local and regional development patterns relating to building uses, residential density, building standards (height, bulk, and setbacks), and mixed uses. In the latter half of the 20th century, land use and zoning codes have exacerbated car-dependent development patterns that take funding away from our main streets and increase dependency on private automobiles. These land use patterns make it hard for our children to walk to school and disproportionately affect cost burdened households, the elderly, and the disabled. Multiple studies have shown a correlation to car-dependent places and higher obesity rates.

Due to these factors, it is clear that to create a more sustainable and healthy transportation network, transportation planning must be coordinated with local and regional land-use decisions to increase the viability and safety of a multitude of transportation modes. Currently, road diets are a transportation planning tool being implemented around the country to transform suburban roads to increase efficiency

and safety for different types of road users including automobile, transit, walking, and biking. It is clear that addressing these concerns and priorities requires a proactive long-range approach to planning.

### The Environment

As the state battles with addressing environmental concerns and conflicting priorities around creating new housing and economic development, it's important to realize the effect we have on our existing resources, around vehicular emissions, energy use, and water consumption. As we improve the conditions and quality of life for our residents, more will see New Mexico as a desirable place to live and to call home. With already strained natural resources, accommodating new residents should be done in a careful way that accounts for long-term resource availability and protection.

Many of our towns and cities have underutilized land and properties that can be targeted for in-fill housing development. Prioritizing infill will remove blighted properties, increase residential density, protect natural lands, and increase the vibrancy of our



communities. This development pattern will also bring more pedestrians onto the street thereby making our streets safer for our residents, expand access to amenities, lower dependency on private automobiles, and increase the economic productivity and support of local businesses. Investing in our existing infrastructure in a "fix it first" approach, has been proven to have a larger return on investment than a growth model that expands highway lanes and clears natural land for more on the fringe single-family housing development.

Prioritizing housing development in areas with access to transit and close proximity to amenities and services will create a new land use development pattern that moves away from automobile dependency. Development strategies such as these, need to be paired with matching investments in the surrounding transportation infrastructure to make alternative transportation methods efficient, safe, and accessible.

A study conducted by the American Public Transportation Association found that every \$1 invested in public transportation has the opportunity to generate nearly \$4 in economic return (1). Additionally, investing in transit and active transportation can reduce a household's annual costs by up to \$10,000 (2). On the flip side, the local return on gas spending is minimal. 86% of gas

spending goes to oil companies where only 14% goes to taxes that help pay for local road and transportation services. Gas stations get back, on average, 3 to 5 cents, per gallon of gasoline sold (3). By these metrics, investing in public transit and pedestrian/walking infrastructure has a much higher economic return for a fraction of the cost.

Not only is sustainable development beneficial to our environment and to our community social structures, but it will also result in less strain on our roadways and less traffic related accidents and fatalities. Coordinating with local and regional land use and economic development agencies will allow our RTPO to target prime areas for sustainable transportation investments in conjunction with continued community and board input.

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Pictured above: Medio Fires that ravaged the Tesuque area in the summer of 2020 as fires tore through much of the Southwest and West.

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1. *Public Transportation Facts*. American Public Transportation Association
  2. *H+T Fact Sheet*. Center for Neighborhood Technology
  3. "Where Your Gas Money Goes." *Union of Concerned Scientists*, 3 Jan. 2013, [www.ucsusa.org/resources/where-your-gas-money-goes](http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/where-your-gas-money-goes).



# Current Conditions

## 2.1 Regional Socioeconomic Breakdown

### Northern Pueblos Region

The Northern Pueblos Region is perhaps the most diverse in the state. Each county represents a very different and unique set of conditions that distinguish it from the others in the region. The Northern Pueblo region comprises the wealthiest and most educated county in the state, the state capital, and the fourth-largest city, as well as many communities struggling with rural poverty and lack of opportunity. Despite these disparate conditions, the region contains a common cultural heritage, as well as an exchange of workers, residents, and tourists who all contribute to its vitality and beauty. As a combined region, the population has grown 3% since 2010 from 232,562 to 239,468 in 2018.

Much like the rest of New Mexico, each county in the NPRTPO region (with the exception being Los Alamos County) has seen an increase in median age from 2010 to 2018 with a high of 48.2 years in Taos and a low of 40.6 in Rio Arriba (the national median age in 2018 was 37.9). Despite seeing population increases in all of the counties, except for Rio Arriba, this population increase is concentrated to residents over 65 years of age. The net increase of this population bracket is 18,175 while prime working-age adults, 35-44 and 45-64, have both seen

decreases of 3,693 and 4,244 respectively. While the region's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty have succeeded in attracted retirees and second home buyers, many of these same communities struggle to retain prime working-age adults through robust employment opportunities.

### Santa Fe County

Santa Fe County contains the 3rd largest county population in the state of New Mexico with 56% of its population living in the City of Santa Fe, the state capital. Situated along the I-25, Santa Fe is within an hour's drive to Albuquerque to the west. The City of Santa Fe contains a robust recreational trail network and is well-served by its local fixed-route bus system, the Santa Fe Trails, and is connected to regional transit providers such as the Rail Runner Express, North Central Regional Transit District (which connects Taos, Española, Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Chama, and Farmington), and New Mexico Park and Ride.

With educational attainment and median income outpacing the national average, Santa Fe is distinguished from its neighbors in Rio Arriba County, Taos County, and San Miguel County who see higher levels of poverty and who struggle to retain high

Figure 2.1.1 Percent Change in Population

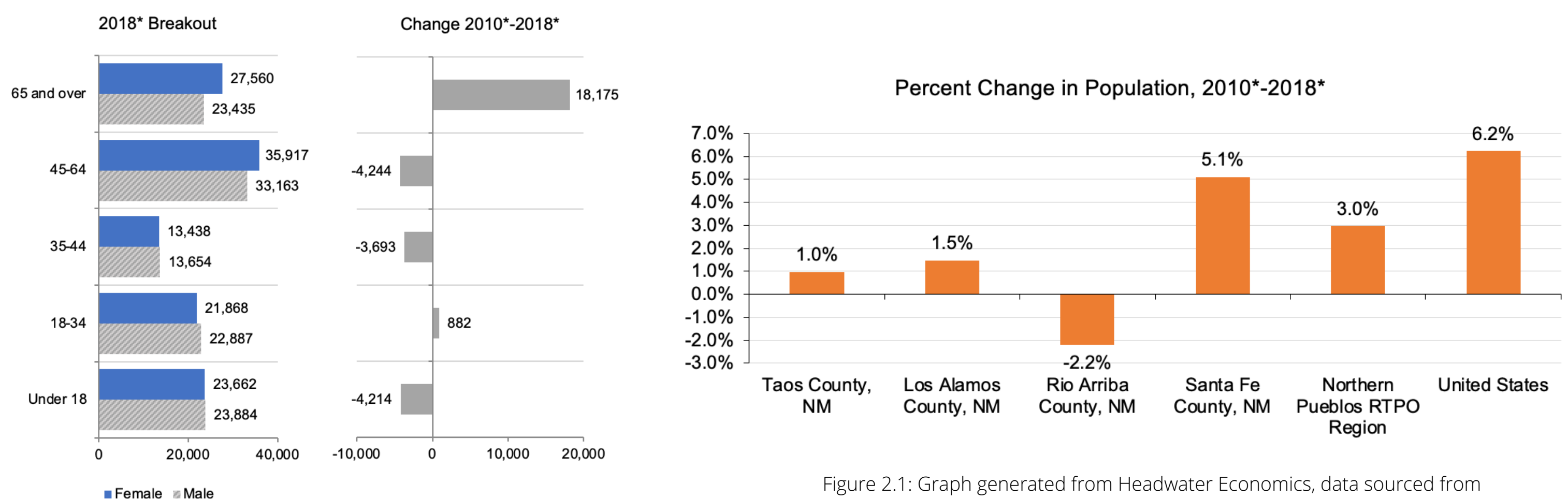


Figure 2.1: Graph generated from Headwater Economics, data sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates



skill workers. Santa Fe County attracts many public sector jobs in state and local government due to containing the state capital, as well as a large tourism sector, growing film industry, and creative economy in its hundreds of art galleries and art collectives like Meow Wolf.

Despite its diverse economy and growing population, Santa Fe contains some threats to its long-term socio-economic wellbeing. Due to it attracting a high number of retirees and second-home buyers paired with an inability to create enough new housing to meet a growing demand, Santa Fe's affordable housing stock continues to shrink affecting young people, renters, and lower-income individuals and families. Some city-wide initiatives are looking to address these issues including the Siler Arts Yard, an affordable live/work housing development for artists, as well as the midtown district, a neighborhood-wide up-zone to create a mixed-use affordable housing district with maker space, higher education, public open space, arts and cultural buildings, and film production studios. These projects prioritize transit accessibility, walkability, and a human scale development pattern that enables multi-modal transportation use and safety.

### **Taos County**

Taos County sits at the southern base of the Rocky Mountains with scenic drops into the Rio Grande gorge, stunning mountain landscape, and diverse Spanish and Native Puebloan communities with a deep and culturally significant history. Like Santa Fe, Taos attracts creatives, outdoor enthusiasts, and



The Santa Fe River Trail (Pictured Above) is an example of a multi-purpose trail that serves Santa Feans in recreation and provides easy and safe access to the plaza.

many retirees drawn to its outdoor recreation, socially and environmentally conscious population, and cultural significance. Due to Taos's heavy reliance on tourism, much of its economy is service-based providing lower-income residents with seasonal and low wage employment opportunities. The recent COVID-19 outbreak has exposed the vulnerability of such an economy that has left many unemployed following state-mandated shutdowns and business closures.

It is unclear whether the work from home measures and exodus away from coastal cities like Los Angeles and New York have exacerbated the housing crisis in Taos but the trends prior to the virus are certainly alarming. The combined housing and transportation costs as a percent of median income in Taos is above 60% outpacing both LA and NYC. With limited housing options in the Town of Taos and other tourism-dependent communities in the county and region, service workers have to live farther away bearing a larger transportation cost burden.

To confront these challenges, the Town of Taos has developed a "Strong at Heart" strategy that seeks to reform its dated zoning code to allow for more multifamily housing development in town, pursue pedestrian and street life improvements in the town center, and develop a safe and connected bicycle network to improve mobility for all residents and transportation system users.

### **Rio Arriba County**

Rio Arriba sits in the northeasternmost part of the region and is the largest in total land area at 5,896 square miles. Rio Arriba is a rural county with the highest Native American population in the region at 16.3% and also the highest Hispanic population at 71.4%. Rio Arriba's largest city, Española serves as a source of affordable housing for workers in nearby Santa Fe and Los Alamos. Rio Arriba County contains many historic Spanish and Mexican Land grant communities the oldest of which are the Santa Cruz community established in 1695 and the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh which received grant hood in 1689 under its former Spanish name, the San Juan Pueblo.



Despite this county representing the youngest median age among the four Northern Pueblo counties of 40.6 in 2018, it is also the only county in the region to experience a population decline from 2010 to 2018 of 2.2%. The county has seen many historic fluctuations in wages due to the boom-and-bust cycles of the oil and natural gas industry (of which it's the third-largest producer in the state). Diversifying the economy will result in more predictable and sustainable economic growth that will ensure the long-term resiliency of its communities and ensure economic opportunity for its workforce.

Due to Española being situated between Los Alamos, Santa Fe, and Taos, the city experiences a lot of commuter traffic to the job hubs of Santa Fe and Los Alamos and weekend visitors travelling north to the outdoor recreational destinations in and around the Enchanted Circle. A recent traffic safety study has been conducted in Española to address key safety challenges in the city as well as address the lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, especially near the fixed transit stops.

### Los Alamos County

Los Alamos County sits between Española and Santa Fe and borders San Ildefonso and Santa Clara Pueblos. The land was used by the Department of War in 1942 to develop the atomic bomb through the Manhattan Project and the county was incorporated in 1968. Much of the existing property was sold to existing residents at the time, but land that was not sold was maintained by the federal government. Although the federal government maintains ownership of much of the land, many parcels have

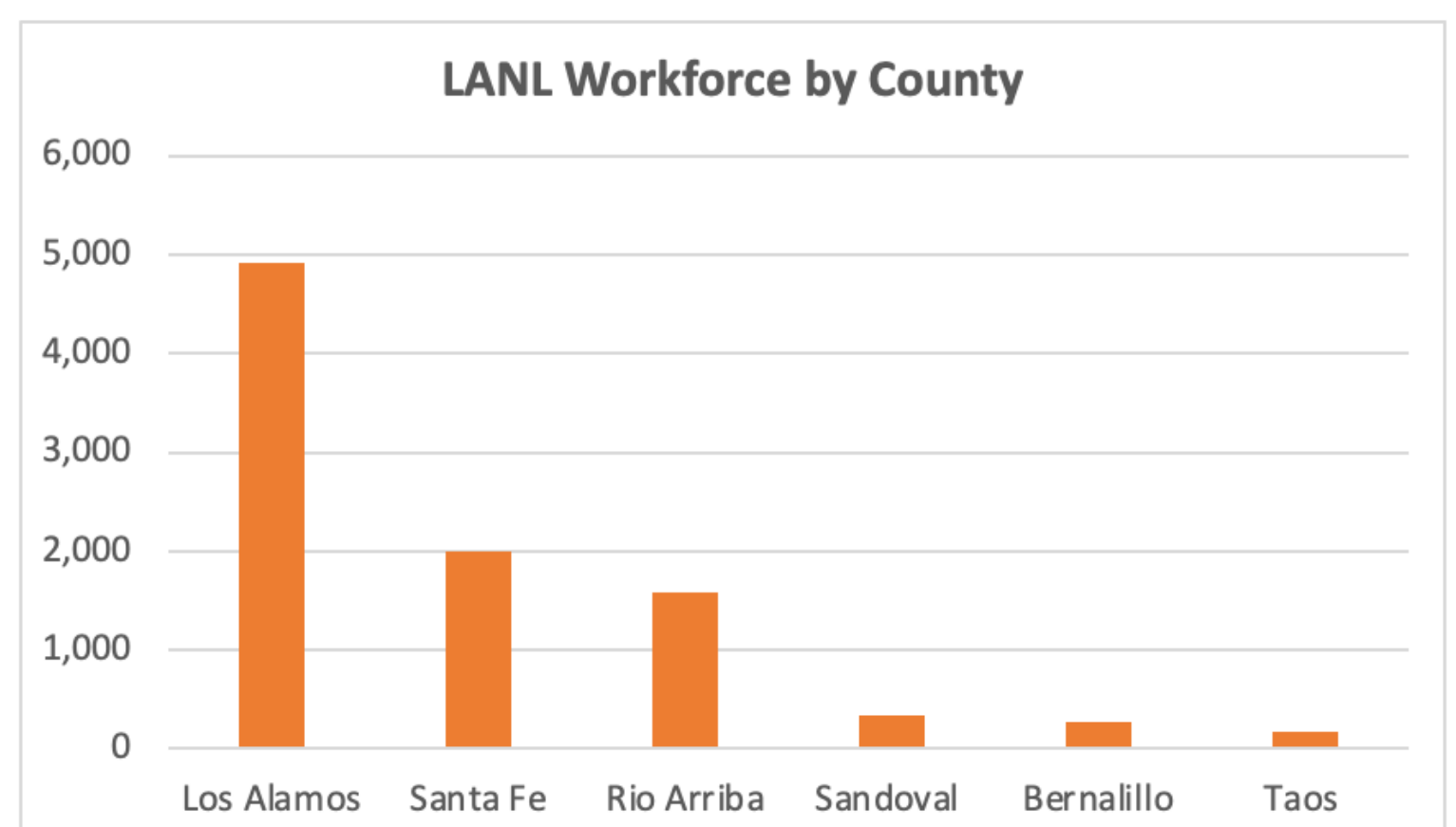
been transferred to the county for economic and community development purposes as well as infrastructure improvements.

Los Alamos has seen a 1.5% increase in population from 2010 and 2018 and a slight decrease in median age from 43.5 to 42.5. In the region, Los Alamos has the highest educational attainment with a larger share of the population with a graduate degree (35%) than those with a bachelor's, associates, or high school level of education. The Los Alamos National Laboratory is a large regional employer with 5,242 employees in Los Alamos County, 2,142 in Rio Arriba County, and 2,639 in Santa Fe county as well as substantial numbers in Sandoval, Bernalillo, and Taos Counties (Economic Impact 2019). Outside of its direct workforce, LANL indirectly employs thousands as contractors and supports STEM-based ventures in the region through economic development initiatives, funding, and free of charge scientific and technical resources for New Mexican businesses (Economic Impact Report).

Due to its small land area and strong local opposition to higher density residential (as seen in the North Mesa Housing Project), Los Alamos County struggles with locating and developing affordable housing within its borders resulting in many LANL employees, service workers within the county, as well as teachers and government employees living outside the county in places like Española and Santa Fe. Even with access to transit, most of these workers resort to a private automobile resulting in congestion along NM 502, one of the few state roads connecting Los Alamos to surrounding communities.



Located in Rio Arriba County, FLUTE is a company specializing in mapping groundwater reserves and contamination. This company received a \$407,000 venture acceleration fund from Los Alamos National Security as well as grant funding from the New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Program.



Los Alamos workforce numbers show a significant workforce population in surrounding counties. Source: Los Alamos National Laboratory



## 2.2 Commuting, Crash, and DUI Data by County

### Regional Commuting Overview

Both Rio Arriba and Santa Fe Counties have a “worked outside of county of residence” rate higher than the state average of 12%. 41.5% of Rio Arriba’s residents worked outside Rio Arriba while Santa Fe contains 15.7%. Due to Espanola’s proximity to Los Alamos and Santa Fe, this has become a popular affordable housing location for professionals who work in those areas. Both Taos and Los Alamos have low rates of residents who worked outside the county at 5.7% and 5.4% respectively. Due to Taos’s relative isolation from larger metropolitan areas, high concentration of retirees, robust service economy, and prevalence of in-county agriculture and sustainable energy generation, few residents look for work outside of the county. Los Alamos County is the smallest county by land area in the state and most residents are employed by the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The land scarcity of LA County means most residents represent the higher income bracket while teachers and service workers who are employed in LA County, live outside in the surrounding communities.

### Los Alamos

About 8,410 in-county workers were counted for Los Alamos, followed by 3,520 commuting in from Santa Fe County, 2,600 from Rio Arriba County, 720 from Sandoval County and 545 from Bernalillo County. Smaller commuter populations into Los Alamos County were counted in 9 other counties.

### Santa Fe

About 56,985 in-county workers were counted for Santa Fe County, followed by 3,970 from Bernalillo County, 2,785 from Rio Arriba County, 2,760 from Sandoval County and 1,525 from San Miguel County. Smaller commuter populations into Santa Fe County were counted in 15 other counties.

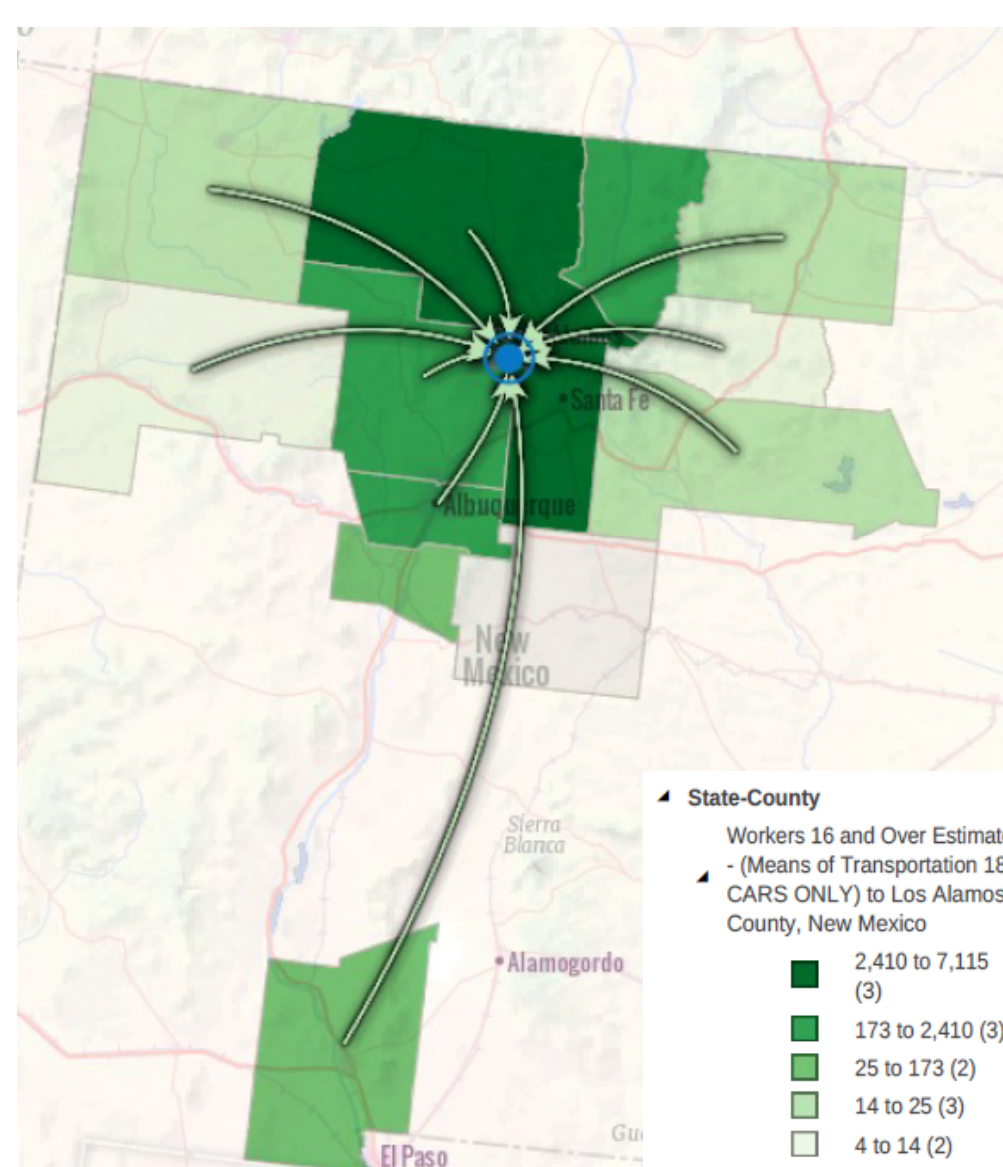
### Taos

About 13,025 in-county workers were counted for Taos County, followed by 400 from Rio Arriba County, 150 from Bernalillo County, 65 from Santa Fe County and 55 from Colfax. Smaller commuter populations into Taos County were counted in 3 other counties.

### Rio Arriba

About 8,370 in-county workers were counted for Rio Arriba county, followed by 1,830 from Santa Fe County, 230 from Taos County, 145 from Bernalillo County, and 115 from Sandoval County. Smaller commuter populations into Rio Arriba County were counted in 8 other counties.

Figure 2.2.1 Commuters into Los Alamos County



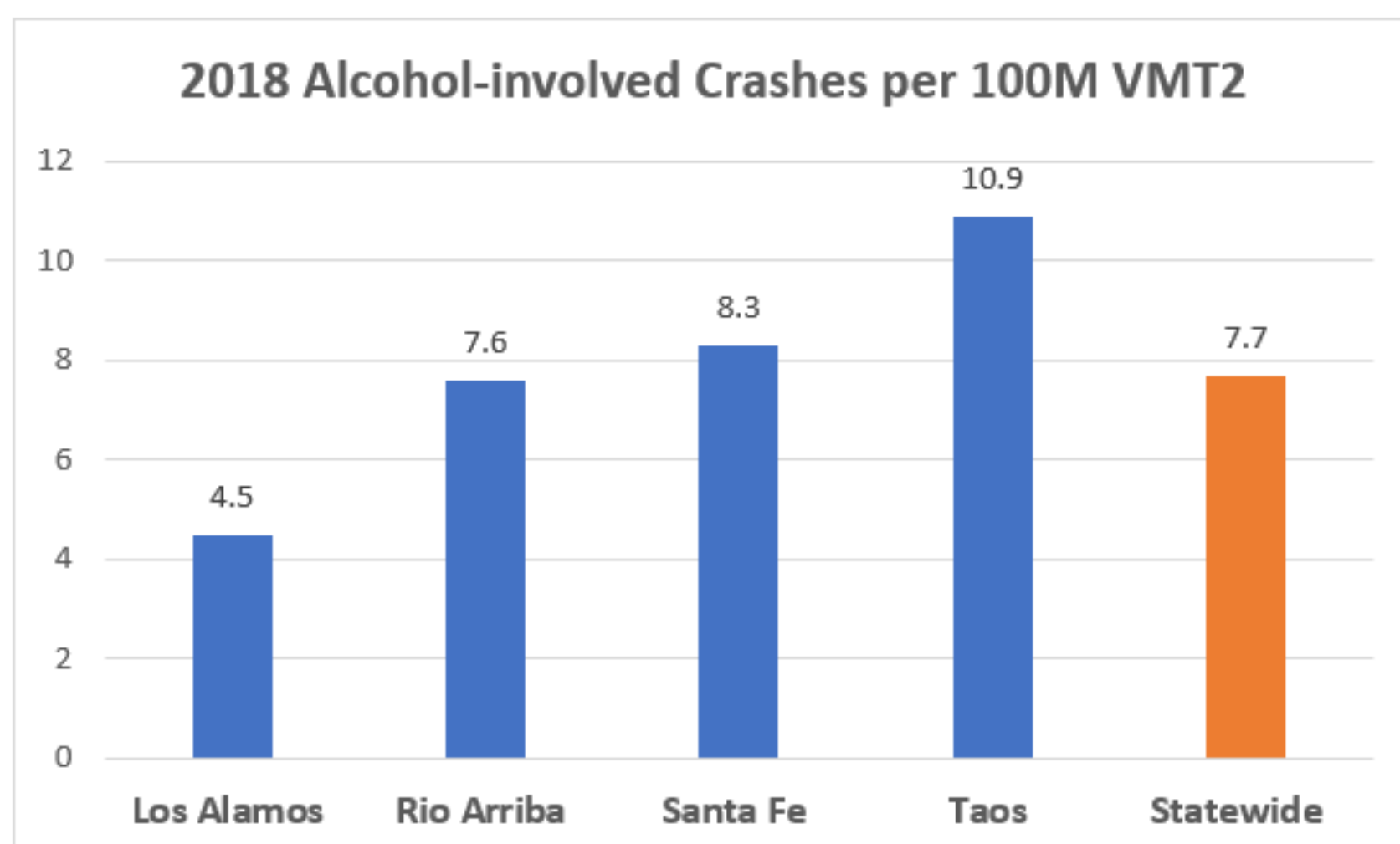
This map demonstrates the large regional footprint of Los Alamos National Laboratory to the Northern Pueblos Region and beyond. The lab employs thousands of employees and contractors and subcontractors that maintain its facilities.

Commuting data and map generated from Census Transportation Planning Products. Source data is American Community Survey 2016.

## NPRTPO DWI and Crash Data Overview

New Mexico has one of the highest motor vehicle fatality rates in the country at 18.7 deaths per 100,000 residents (compared to the national average of 11.2 deaths per 100,000) (1). 21% of New Mexico's roadway fatalities were pedestrians compared to 17% at the national level which points to the fact that despite NM ranking 8th in the nation for car dependency and being largely rural and sparsely populated compared to other states, it still outpaces the national average for pedestrian fatalities and points to a pressing need to confront pedestrian and bicycle roadside safety, implement "complete street" design principles and safety improvements, and increase law enforcement along identified corridors. Among the state's counties with the highest rate of pedestrian fatalities, Santa Fe County ranked third with a rate of 33% behind Bernalillo (40.4%) and Colfax (40%) (2).

Another pressing concern in New Mexico is the rate of alcohol use in fatal crashes at 72% compared to the national average of 65%. Tragically, three of the four Northern Pueblos RTPO counties tie or exceed the state average for 2018 Alcohol-Involved crashes per 100M Vehicle Miles Travelled. With a rate of 10.9 Alcohol Involved Crashes per 100M VMT, Taos County has the third highest in the state behind McKinley and Bernalillo (3). Santa Fe County comes in 6th with a rate of 8.3 (3). This points to a crisis happening in the state and in the Northern Pueblos RTPO region that needs to be addressed to improve safety and reduce transportation related fatalities.



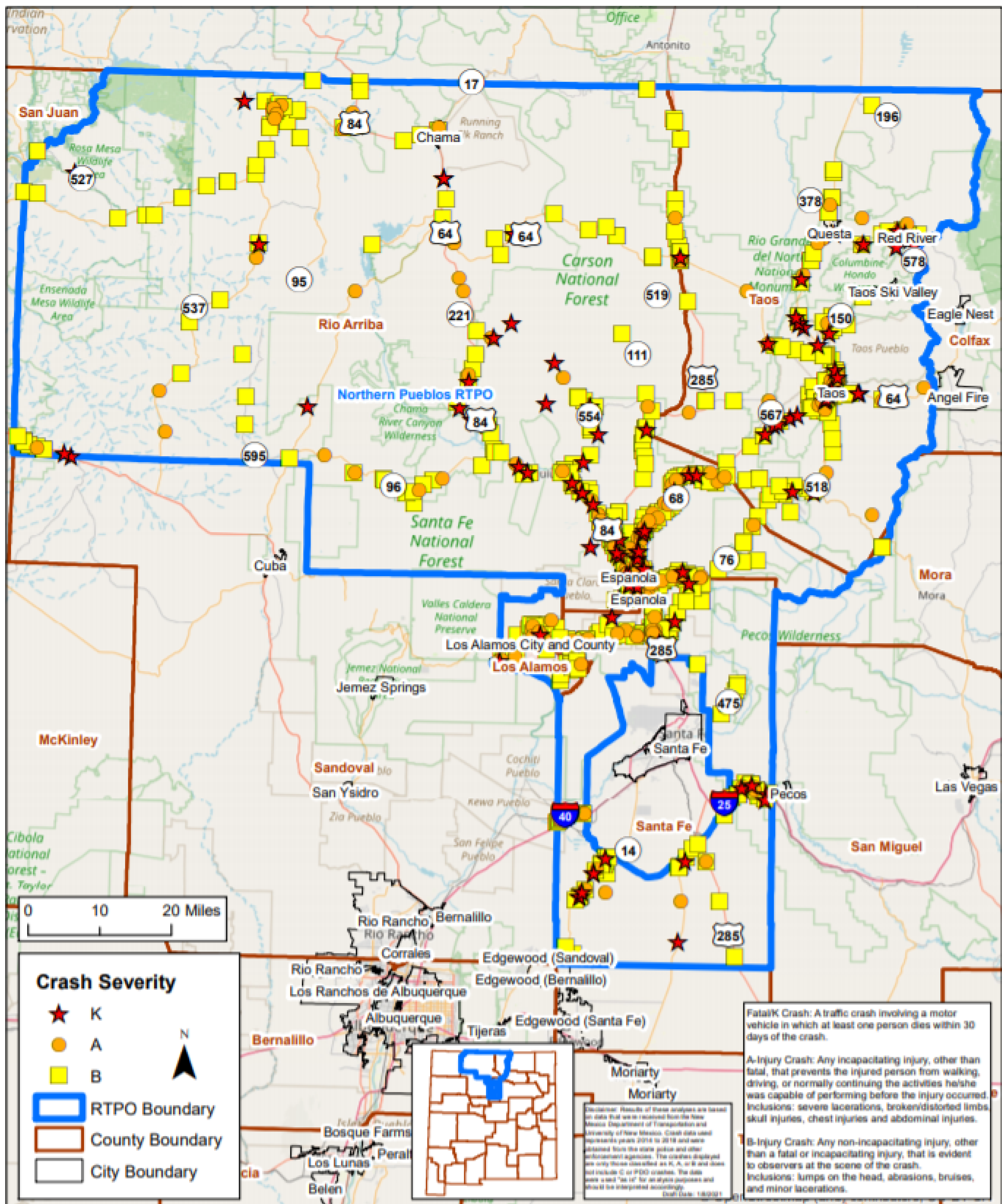
1. *Fatality Facts 2018, State by State*, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Highway Loss Data Institute, 501(c)(3)

2. *New Mexico Traffic Crash Annual Report 2018*, New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) Traffic Safety Division and Traffic Records Bureau

3. *New Mexico DWI Report 2018*, New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) Traffic Safety Division and Traffic Records Bureau

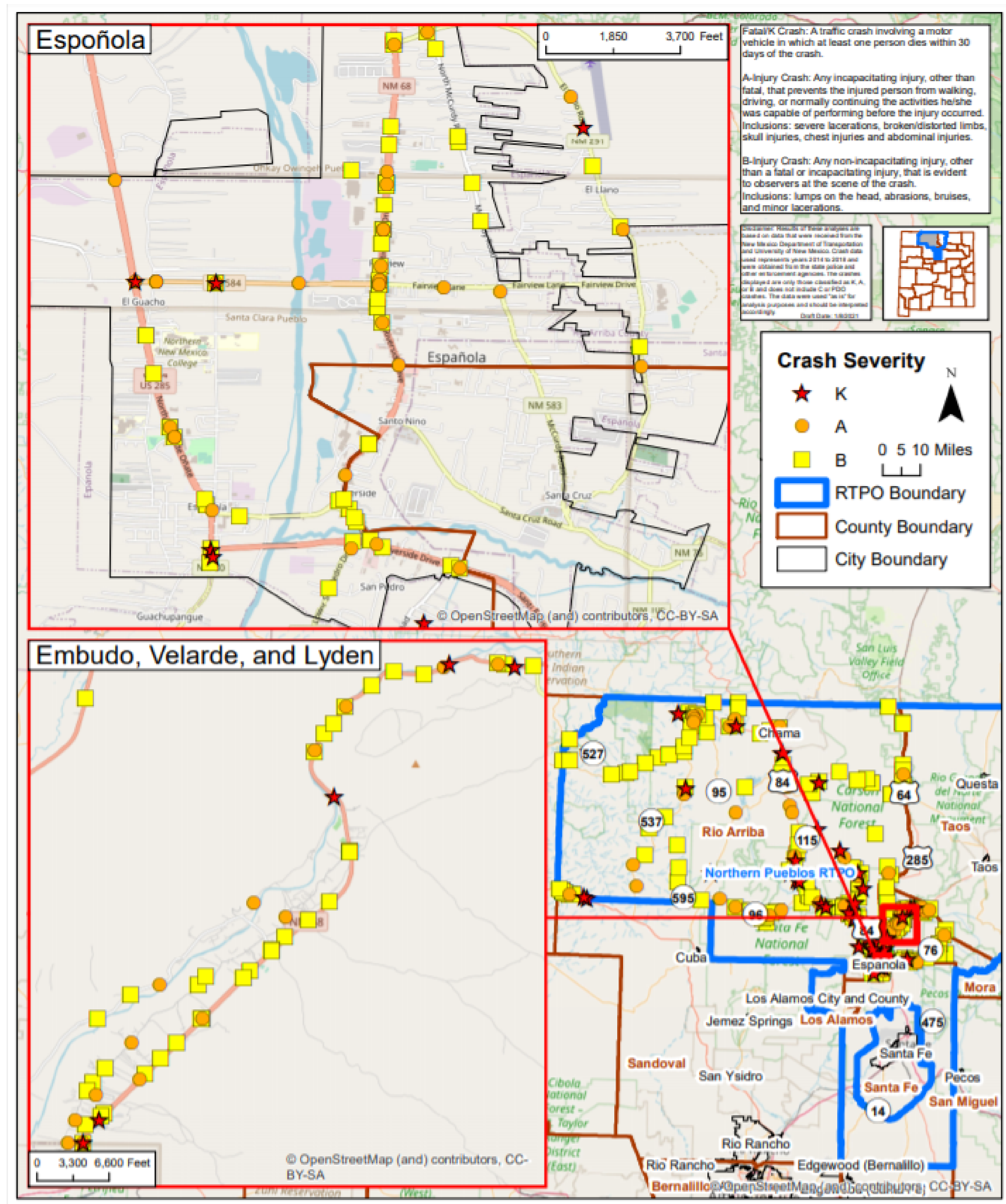


Figure 2.2.2 Northern Pueblos RTPO 2014-2018 KAB Crashes



All crash maps were provided from NMDOT as RTP support items as part of the state's Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan (LRSTP).

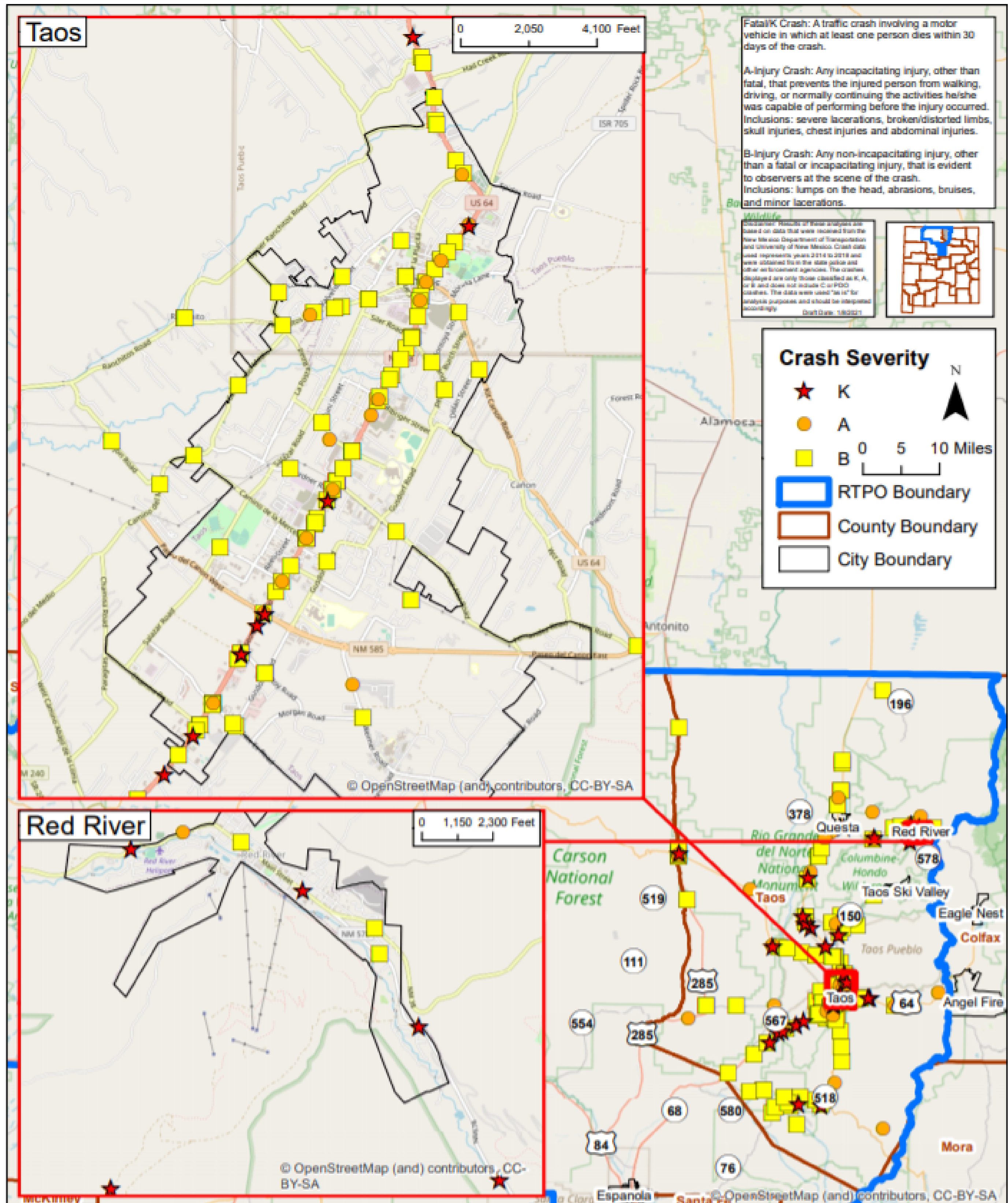
Figure 2.2.3 Rio Arriba 2014-2018 KAB Crashes



All crash maps were provided from NMDOT as RTP support items as part of the state's Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan (LRSTP).

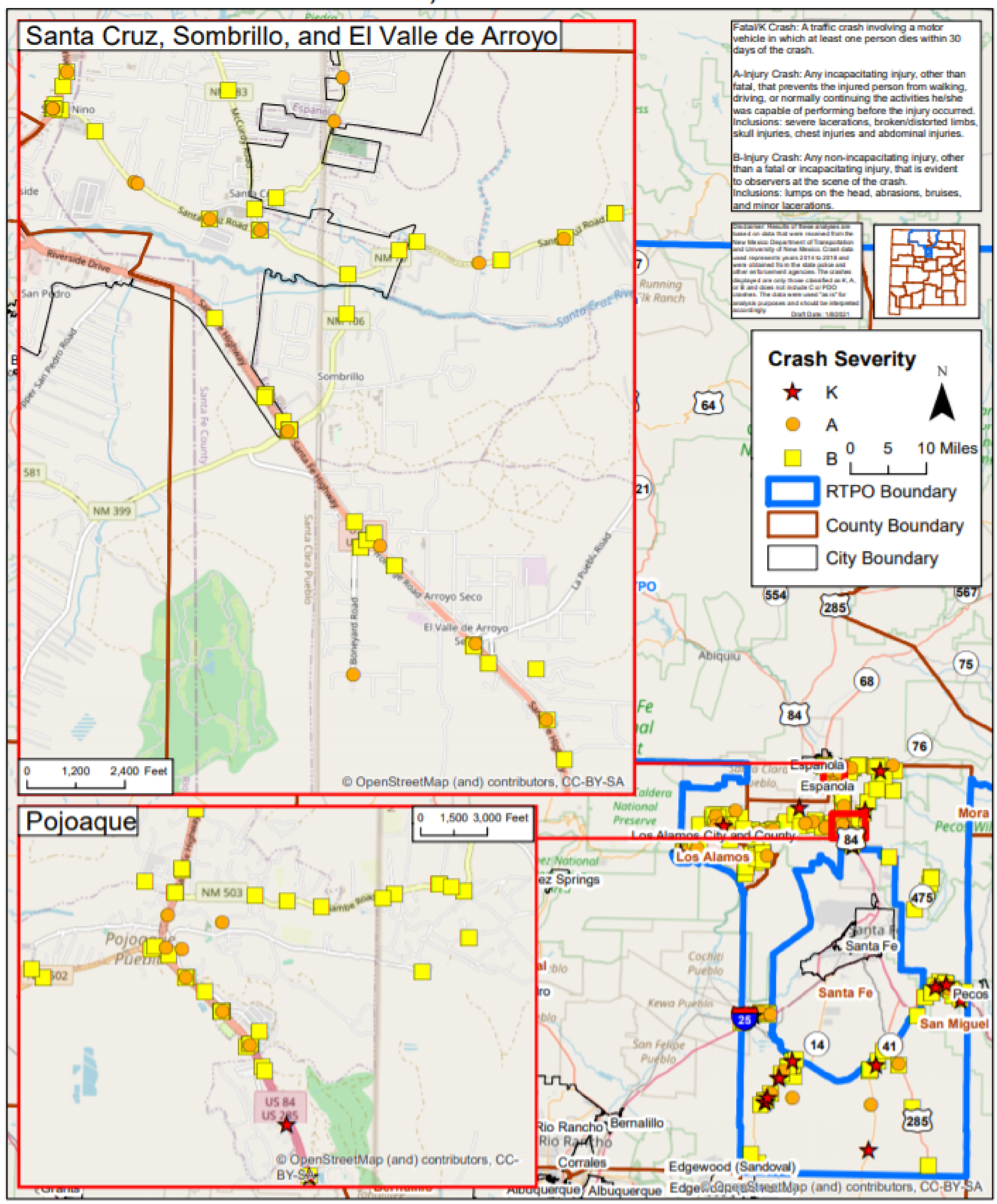


Figure 2.2.4 Taos County 2014-2018 KAB Crashes



All crash maps were provided from NMDOT as RTP support items as part of the state's Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan (LRSTP).

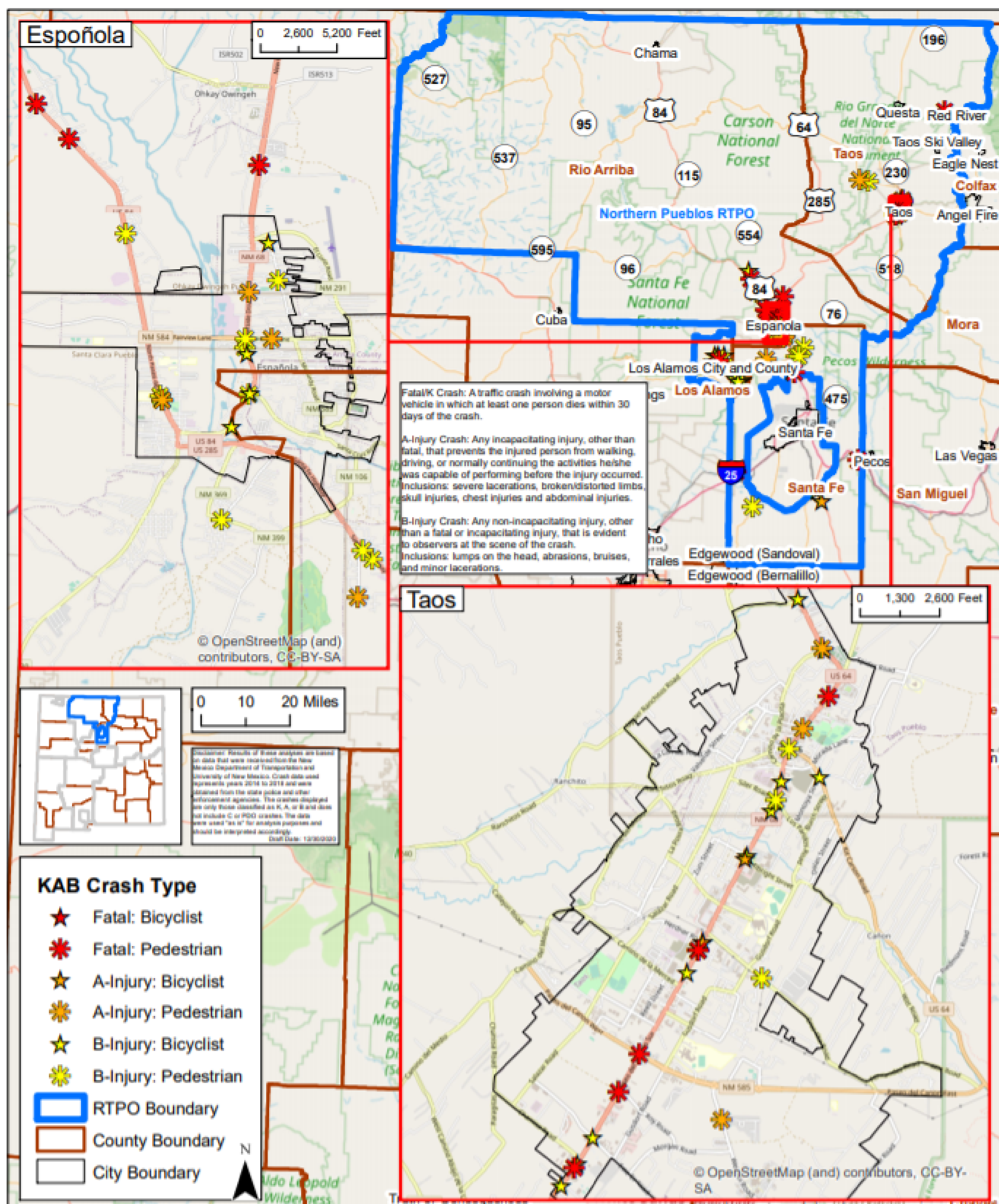
Figure 2.2.3 Santa Fe and Los Alamos Counties 2014-2018 KAB Crashes



All crash maps were provided from NMDOT as RTP support items as part of the state's Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan (LRSTP).



Figure 2.2.4 NPRTPO Pedestrian and Bicycle 2014-2018 KAB Crashes



All crash maps were provided from NMDOT as RTP support items as part of the state's Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan (LRSTP).

# Challenges, Opportunities, Goals

## 3.1 Public Outreach

### Public Outreach

The public outreach survey collected responses over a two-month period with the first recorded survey on August 5th and the last coming in on October 14th. The NPRTPO board members took on the task of distributing the survey in their various communities through media publications, Facebook groups and other forms of social media, email lists, and word of mouth. The survey count totaled 192 responses with 120 from Taos County, 53 from Santa Fe County, 10 from Rio Arriba County, and 9 from Los Alamos County.

During monthly meetings, survey results were given to the members which included an overview of which counties saw the highest response rate, color coating total results and fill-in responses by county, and providing graphical representations of each question and how they were answered.

The survey began by asking the responder to identify their community and their age group. The subsequent sections were broken into three main components: (1) Transportation Investments and Priorities, (2) Transportation Challenges and Safety, and (3) Transportation Accessibility. The survey included multiple-choice, ranking on a scale from 1-5, checkboxes (with fill-in option), and short and long answer fill-in questions.



### 1) Transportation Investments and Priorities

This section comprises of three questions: (1) Please rate the conditions of transportation infrastructure in your community (Not applicable, 1 – 5), (2) What transportation mode would you invest in most for your community (Pick your TOP 3), (3) What road, bridge, street, sidewalk, or other transportation-related infrastructure would you like to improve most in your community? (write-in question).

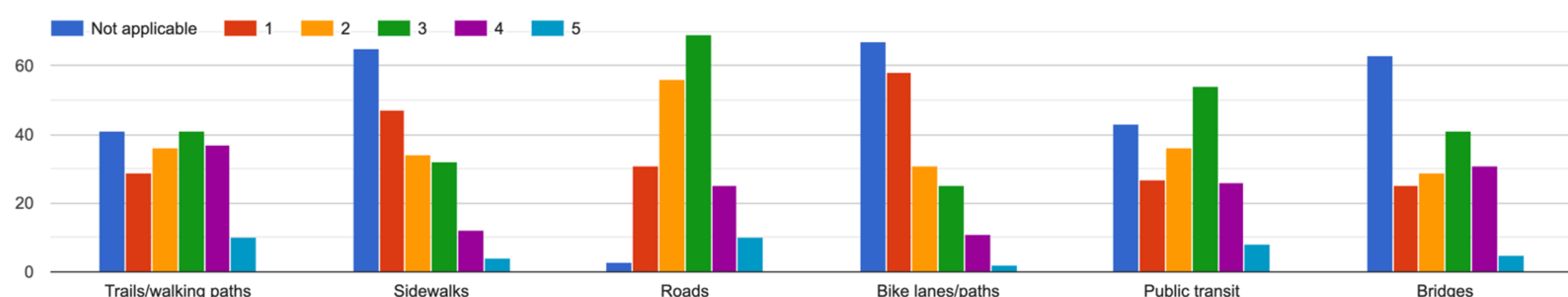
Among the first question results, bike lanes and sidewalks were the lowest-ranked transportation infrastructure with the majority of survey takers selecting “not applicable” or 1 out of 5. Roads were given a 3 more than anything else while trails and walking paths received similar results across the board up to 4, with an average of 3.7, with only 10 selecting 5 out of 5 (see figure 3.1.1). Despite high counts of N/A for Public Transit and Bridges, both of

these categories received a large number of survey takers select 3 or higher.

The next question was a check box option that asked survey-takers to select the top three transportation-related investments they would like to see in their communities. Roadway Maintenance was selected by 141 survey takers followed by Roadway Improvements (Safety/Congestion) at 116, Bike Lanes/Paths at 98, Trails at 56, Public Transit at 52, Sidewalks also at 52, and bridges at 13. Survey takers were given the option of selecting “Other” and writing in an additional answer option. Many responders used the fill-in option to request more speed bumps in residential areas and overall speed enforcement, erosion control, pedestrian and bike improvements at intersections, and snow plowing. These fill-ins were assigned to the total counts of the broader categories listed above.

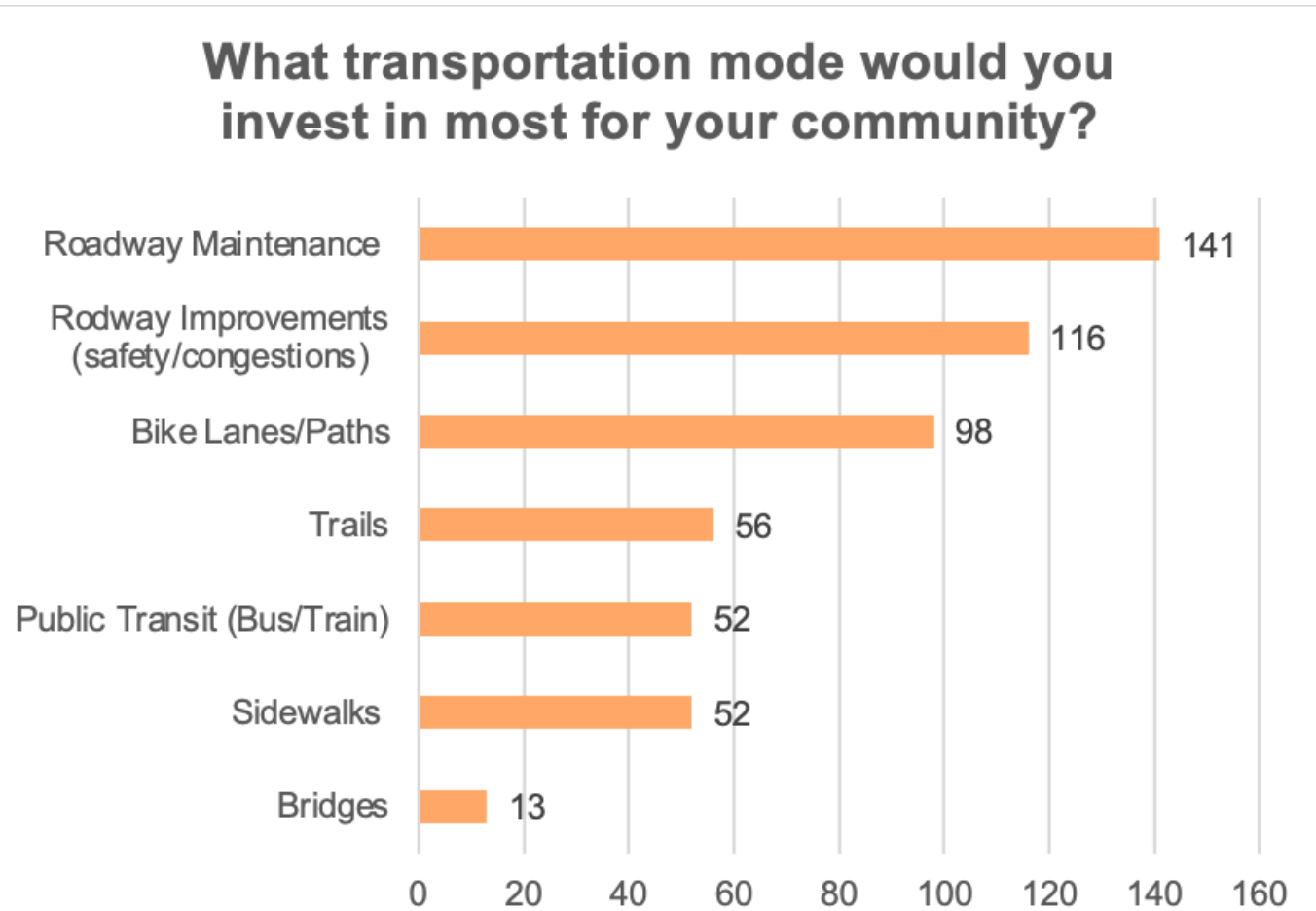
Figure 3.1.1 Public Survey Responses - Rating Transportation Infrastructure

Please rate the conditions of transportation Infrastructure in your community.





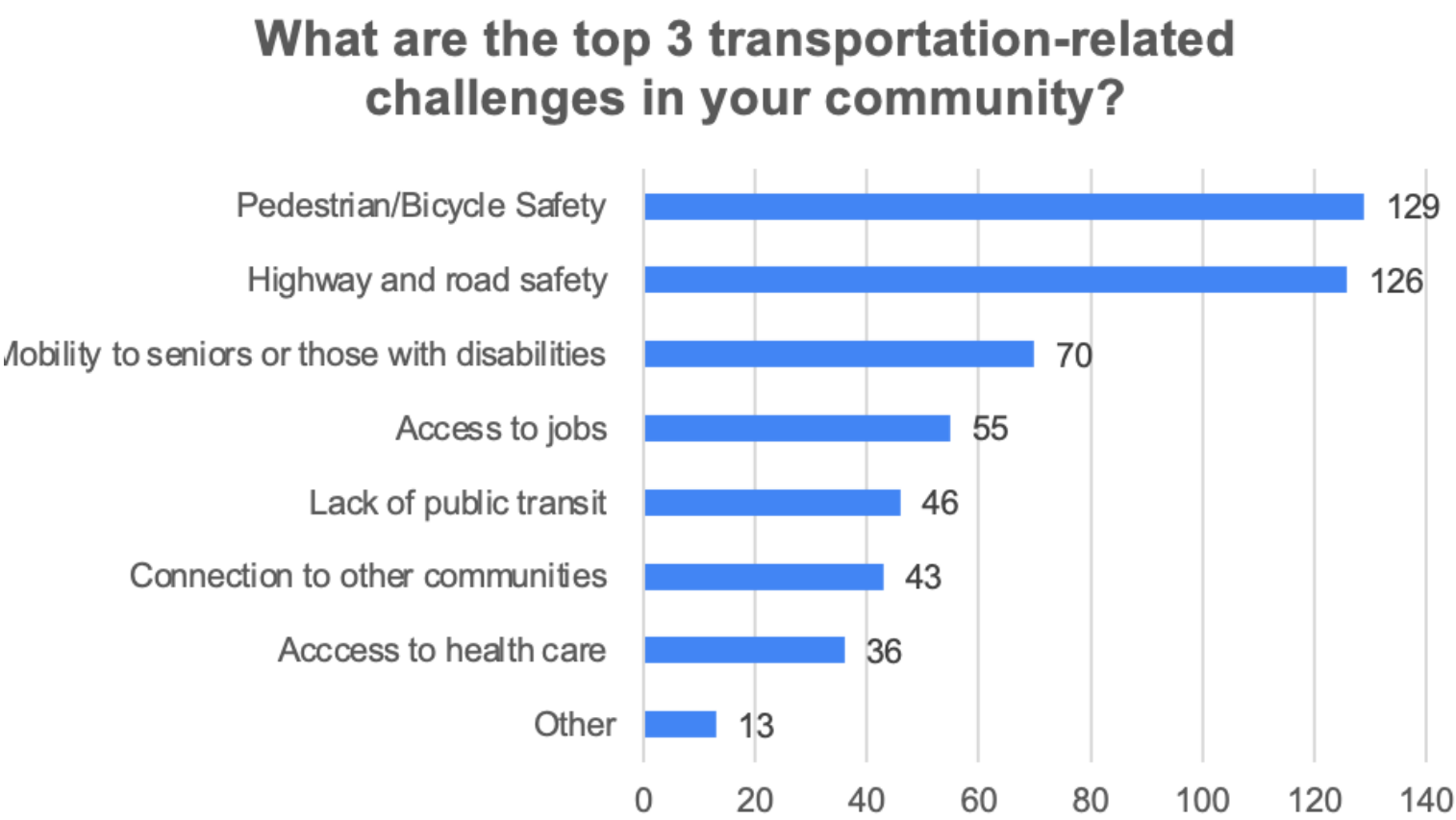
The last question in this section was an optional fill-in question that asked survey-takers to identify specific roads, sidewalks, or other transportation-related infrastructure that is in need of improvement and investment. 174 of the 192 survey takers responded to this. These responses were sorted by county and distributed to the members during monthly meetings as reading material. The consensus was that these fill-ins were very helpful in designating sites and locations for future investment opportunities.



2) Transportation Challenges and Safety

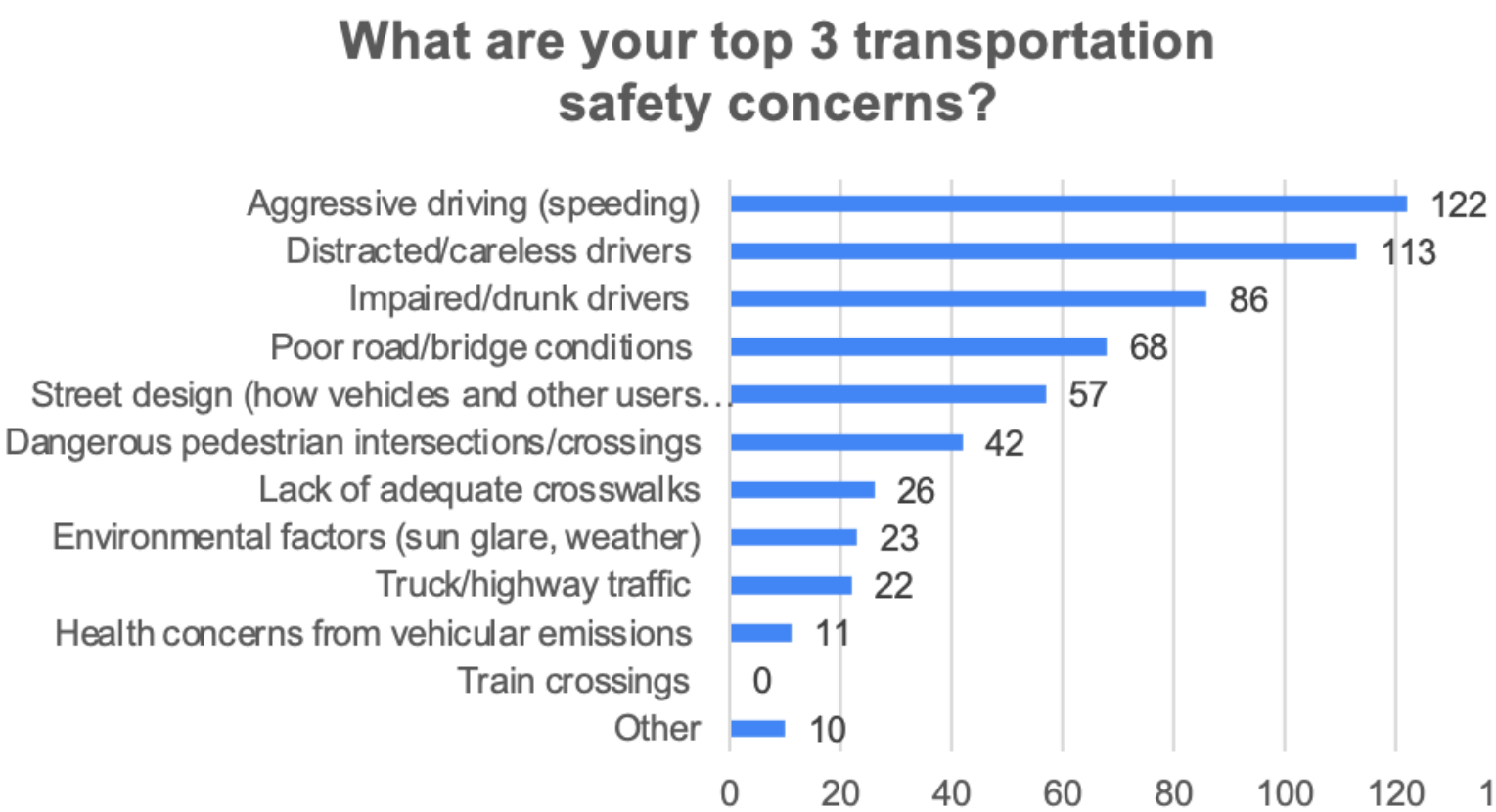
The second section focused on transportation-related safety concerns and challenges, as well as a fill-in option to speak directly to local needs. The first two questions: “What are your top 3 transportation-related challenges in your community?” and “What are your top 3 transportation safety concerns?” asked survey-takers to check off their top three choices with the option of selecting “other” and writing in something not listed. The bulk of the write-ins were specified versions of the categories already provided and were thus added to the final count of those categories, but some could not be assigned and as a result, were listed under “other”.

Section 2 Question Results



Examples of write-ins for "other"

- "too many speed bumps"
- "not enough speeding enforcement"
- "access to housing"
- "access to housing"
- "congestion near downtown"
- "potholes"
- "commute of essential workers during covid"
- "ATV use on the roadway"
- "Roads are falling apart"
- "Speed bumps are needed"
- "loose dogs attacking bikers and pedestrians"
- "no middle or side striping"



## 3.3 Goals, Priorities, and Strategies

### 1. Operate with Transparency and Accountability

#### NPRTPO Priorities

- Continue to balance urban and rural needs to drive equitable regional investments.
- Improve decision-making; improve communication between agencies and smaller communities.
- Provide technical support for local government agencies and tribes.
- Intern government co-operation and collaboration.
- Develop a transparent prioritization process.



#### NPRTPO Strategies

- Coordinate with the state DOT and Regional and Local Partners to align planning efforts to ensure equitable distribution of funding.
- Recommend input of long-range planning processes guidance into NMDOT's Planning Procedures Manual and STIP Procedures.
- Develop, communicate, and align project applications based on the relationship between program funding levels and expected program results.
- Continue to improve project identification and delivery through continued communication with NMDOT and District 5 (ie. Quarterly project review meetings).
- Develop a database for key criteria concerning project development and readiness.
- Educate member entities on the T/LPA handbook on a glossary of the terms and requirements that pertain to transportation projects and criteria for funding, project development, and readiness.
- Conduct a periodic citizen survey on regional transportation needs.



## 2. Improve Safety and Public Health for All System Users

### NPRTPO Priorities

- Work with NMDOT and Regional Transit Providers to create an integrated transit system to improve access to healthcare.
- Take a proactive approach to public health to promote physical activity (create a transportation plan that promotes healthy lifestyles in our transportation system).
- Address the dangers in using right-of-way for multimodal use along roadways.
- Faster, non-stop transit service between communities.
- Reduce regional roadway fatalities and serious injuries.
- Promote alternative transportation modes to lower VMT.
- Promote safety at wildlife crossings for both wildlife and road users.



### NPRTPO Strategies

- Coordinate with the New Mexico Strategic Highway Safety Plan by identifying counter measures to reduce crashes when maintaining, upgrading, or reconstructing infrastructure and evaluating effectiveness of safety investments.
- Include safety of all modes as a prioritization factor to be incorporated into the RTIPR.
- Support the governor's executive order on addressing climate change and energy waste prevention.
- Support local and regional entities in expanding electric vehicle charging stations throughout our region.
- Improve safety data quality, accessibility, and timeliness. Emphasize safety for most vulnerable system users (older citizens, children, individuals with disabilities, pedestrians, cyclists).
- Identify the top safety risks in the region and conduct systematic safety planning efforts, including evaluating potential strategies.
- Promote Road Safety Assessment (RSA), and other safety planning efforts, at the regional and local levels to identify road safety deficiencies and implementation strategies.
- Engage NMDOT Transit and Rail Bureau to coordinate a working group to investigate creating a coordinated regional transit system.
- Support regional efforts to transition bus fleets, transit and private automobiles to electric and sustainable energy sources.
- Adopt transportation safety policies relating to Complete Streets, pedestrian design, and access management.

### 3. Preserve and Maintain the Local/Tribal Governments' Transportation Infrastructure over the Long Term

#### NPRTPO Priorities

- Address infrastructure deterioration.
- Provide ITS for improved roadway intelligence and internet reliability.
- Dedicated state transit fund.
- LTAP trainings on asset management.
- Scale state asset management process for local and tribal governments.
- Support the creation of a dedicated state transit capital fund.
- Use a data driven approach to managing assets.



#### NPRTPO Strategies

- Create and maintain a comprehensive inventory of all assets being submitted through the RTPO process, including pavement and bridge conditions and current and projected use of the infrastructure.
- Address infrastructure deterioration through education and training to assist local and tribal entities (ex. pavement preservation and treatment, bridges, unpaved roads, culverts).
- Support the state in collecting data on regional and local transportation infrastructure.
- Enhance training opportunities for local and tribal entities' workforce (CDL licensing, heavy road equipment, etc.).



## 4. Enhance Multimodal Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility

### NPRTPO Priorities

- Promote the adoption of complete streets policies at the local and tribal level (road system that improves safety and accessibility for all users).
- Encourage coordination among regional transit providers.
- Promote regional multimodal connections.
- Promote local government ADA compliance (ADA transition plan/ Title VI) as a requirement for federal funding.
- Encourage tribal entities to adopt an ADA transition plan (not required).



### NPRTPO Strategies

- Continue to work with local agencies to coordinate schedules and make web-based transit information more accessible.
- Coordinate with a state bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian (BPE) plan to refine the strategies set forth in the NMTP and establish priorities for trail development.
- Develop guidance to help local communities adopt location efficient and transit-supportive development site planning ordinances.
- Work with the New Mexico Aging and Long-term Services Department and other partners to identify transportation safety features needed to better support an older traveling population.
- Continue transit rating and ranking process for 5310 & 5311
- Promote seamless fares and transfers among transit providers
- Encourage first and last mile initiatives
- Coordinate transit and multimodal priorities with local land use and zoning initiatives.

## 5. Respect New Mexico's Culture, History, Environment and Quality of Life

### NPRTPO Priorities

- Address economic development.
- Shift from goods-based economy to activity related businesses.



### NPRTPO Strategies

- Work with the New Mexico Economic Development Department and other partners to define cultural corridors and other transportation oriented tourism opportunities to improve the quality of visitor travel experience in New Mexico.
- Help other state agencies (Tourism, Economic Development, etc.) to achieve the goals of New Mexico Main Street, the state authorized Arts and Cultural Districts, and other programs through context sensitive design and management of NMDOT's transportation assets.



## 4.3 Rural Transportation Improvement Program Recommendation (RTIPR)

The last question in this section was an optional fill-in question that asked survey-takers to identify specific roads, sidewalks, or other transportation-related infrastructure that is in need of improvement and investment. 174 of the 192 survey takers responded to this. These responses were sorted by county and distributed to the members during monthly meetings as reading material. The consensus was that these fill-ins were very helpful in designating sites and locations for future investment opportunities.

### Selection Process

The selection process begins with completed Project Feasibility Form (PFF) and Project Prospectus Form (PPF) prioritized by criteria established by the NPRTPO Members. The projects are included in the NPRTPO Regional Transportation Improvement Program Recommendations (RTIPR). The prioritization process will be conducted annually during January to February. During the District quarterly meetings, the eligibility requirements will be reviewed. ADA and Title VI requirements are reviewed at every RTPO Meeting.

District Engineers evaluate RTIPRs considering available funding and needs. RTIPRs and District Engineer recommendations are forwarded to the department's STIP Development Unit for inclusion as appropriate into the STIP.

The STIP must be approved by the State Transportation Commission, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The STIP is a four-year document. Every two years a new STIP is developed and there is a quarterly amendment cycle.

During the month of March, coordinate and co-facilitate RTIPR “ZIPPER” meetings with NMDOT District Engineering staff, NPRTPO Members, and NMDOT Planning Liaisons as appropriate. The broad goal of the ZIPPER meeting is to combine or ‘zip’ the various RTIPRs within the NMDOT Engineering District together, resulting in a list of prioritized projects for the District. This is necessary since there are many RTPOs within a single NMDOT District.

The RTPOs responsibility is to coordinate with the NMDOT District Engineering staff and Planning Liaisons to establish the dates, times, and locations for these “ZIPPER” meetings. Another responsibility is to distribute the combined, prioritized RTIPR/ZIPPER to the NMDOT District Engineers, Planning Liaisons, and all relevant RTPOs within ten days of the prioritization meeting.

## 4.4 Funding Sources and Revenue Streams

### Background

There are many opportunities for funding sources and revenue streams regarding transportation planning projects. The United States Congress, typically, votes to fund an ongoing transportation infrastructure bill every 5 years. An ongoing bill funding infrastructure improvement was passed in 2015 under the Obama Administration called the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). This funding is disbursed to States and applied for by local governments through grants for various state transportation projects. The process for funding includes a preliminary stage of applying for the grant funding by local government entities using Project Feasibility Forms (PFFs) which establish the project's worthiness, or feasibility for funding and economic impact. The process is usually mediated by a Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) between local and state governments. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) verifies project feasibility and guides the local governments into a pathway for funding approval. After the PFF is submitted and meetings are held between an NMDOT and the applicant to discuss feasibility the local government and responsible charge of the project funding application is directed to complete a Project Prospectus Form (PPFs). These forms must be completed in as much detail as possible to ensure that the project be seriously considered for funding and submitted to the RTPO or MPO. The local and state government are required to match a percentage of the total project cost with the state typically funding the larger portion of the total project cost.

The State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) which is developed to outline proposed funding for transportation projects within the state is effective for 4 years. All MPOs must complete a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) which is developed every 2 years to outline proposed funding for transportation projects within the Metropolitan Planning Organization's boundaries for the next 4 years. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is updated every 4 to 5 years to guide Metropolitan areas with a long-range plan. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is like the MTP but for the different regions outside of Metropolitan boundaries. A comprehensive list of proposed projects outside of the Metropolitan areas to improve transportation related infrastructures is called the Regional Transportation Improvement Program Recommendation (RTIPR).

### Funding Sources

#### Transportation Alternative Program (TAP)

Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) is a reimbursement program that funds pedestrian and bicycle facilities or multimodal infrastructure projects and programs. TAP requires about a 14.56% match. Maximum application amount is \$2 million and minimum amount is \$75,000. Requirements include proof of right-of-way, basic maps, PPF and PFF forms completed, resolution of sponsorship and must be in the STIP or RTIPR. This program is funded every year for a total of about \$5.7 million to be used statewide and expended before the 4-year mark. Large populations or Metropolitan areas with populations of 200,001 and above have about \$1.71 million in funds available. Areas with populations of 5,001-200,000 are allotted about \$1.09 million. Populations of 5,000 or less have about \$695,000. The amount set aside for any area is about \$2.85 million.

#### Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a reimbursement program funding recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized trail purposes with a 14.56% match requirement. The total funding was \$1,415,533 with \$424,659 for both motorized and non-motorized usage. A total of \$566,213 for diverse usage.

#### Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement program

is used to fund projects that improve air quality and reduce congestion. Funding of about \$10 million a year and a match of 14.56% required include 3 categories. (1) Projects that reduce the number of vehicle trips and/or vehicle miles traveled (VMT). (2) Projects that reduce emissions related to traffic congestion and/or (3) Projects that reduce the per mile rate of vehicle emissions through improved vehicle and fuel technologies.



### **Highway Safety and Improvement Program**

**(HSIP)** requires a 90% federal and 10% local match and is a program that improves safety of 3 major areas: driver and pedestrian, vehicle, roadway. These safety improvements encompass four functions groups: (1) education of driver, pedestrian, and bicyclist, (2) enforcement of traffic and vehicle related laws, (3) emergency medical response to traffic crashes involving injuries and fatalities, and (4) engineering physical improvements to facilities or systems that improve the safety of the transportation network.

### **Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)**

was formally the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant. This is a competitive USDOT grant. State and local governments can apply for funding. The general match requirements are 80% federal and 20% local, though USDOT may deem it necessary to increase the federal match for rural areas. The total funds for BUILD in 2020 was \$1 billion. The BUILD program gives special consideration to those projects that emphasize improved access to reliable, safe, and affordable transportation for communities in rural areas, such as projects that improve infrastructure condition, address public health and safety, promote regional connectivity, or facilitate economic growth or competitiveness. In 2020, USDOT was tasked to award no less than \$15 million for planning, preparation, or design of eligible projects. Grants under BUILD for 2020 may be between \$5 - \$25 million with the exception that rural projects be a minimum of \$1 million. There is no minimum for planning grants. The current federal legislation is due to expire and may be retained under a continuing resolution or new legislation. As legislation is approved, this section will be updated. Specific information may be found at [www.transportation.gov](http://www.transportation.gov)

**Capital Outlay** is appropriated by the NM State legislature and may be used for funding of transportation projects if legislation permits. The process may vary and is subject to the approval of the appropriating legislature and to the possibility of the Governor of New Mexico's line-item veto. Capital outlay is 100% state funding but any project that utilizes any federal funding or properties (right of way, etc.) may be subject to federal standards.

### **The Transportation Project Fund (TPF)**

was formally the Local Government Transportation Project Fund (LGTPF) which was first introduced and passed in the 2019 NM legislative session under House Bill (HB) 694 (Laws 2019, Chapter 205, Section 1) and was amended with the passing of HB 207 of the 2020 state legislative session (Laws of 2020, Chapter 31, Section 1). This grant allows for the state to cover 95% of a proposed project and up to 100% with hardship waiver. A county, municipal government, or tribe may apply for this fund. RTPs and MPOs ultimately set their process of accepting applications with direction and assistance from NMDOT. Legislation states that the Secretary of NMDOT shall report to the State Transportation Commission (STC) every August 1st a list of projects that have been identified through the MPO/RTP planning process for consideration of funding. The STC must approve a list of projects to be funded every September 1st. NERTPO has seen about \$10 million+ investment from this fund into the region in 2019. Unfortunately, the state legislature did not fund the program in 2020. This program is codified under Section 67-3-78 NMSA 1978 and identifies a transportation project as environmental and other studies, planning, design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure, and acquisition of rights of way necessary for the development of transportation infrastructure, in a county, municipality or tribe, but "transportation project" does not mean a transportation beautification project, as determined by the state transportation commission. Though it was not funded in 2020, the legislation may be funded in future years.

### **The Local Government Road Fund (LGRF)**

**program** has a State match of 75% and local match of 25%. This funding is used for project development, construction, reconstruction, improvement, maintenance, or repair of public highways, streets and public-school parking lots, acquisition of right-of-way, and in place material for construction or improvements. There are 5 funding types available in the LGRF: County Cooperative Program (SP) is for counties only with approval and monetary award by the District. 18-month project timeframe that expires on December 31st and are awarded based on fiscal history and audits.

County School Bus Route Program (SB) is for counties only with approval and monetary award by the District. 18-month project timeframe that expires on December 31st. Awarded based on fiscal history and audits. Municipal Arterial Program (MAP) is for municipalities only with a 24-month project timeframe that expires on June 30th and are awarded based on fiscal history and audits. Municipal Co-Op Program (SP) is for Municipalities only with an 18-month project timeframe that expires on December 31st and is awarded by the District based on fiscal history and audits.

There are a few things that should be submitted

when seeking the LGRF funding sources before the deadline on March 15th.

- Letter of intent.
- Location including a map.
- Scope of work.
- Project estimate with the amount that is requested of the State.
- Justification for the construction.
- Certification that the project is necessary improvement for the public good to serve the municipality, county, school district and is on a public highway.
- A letter, a resolution and an estimate per project application are required for approval.



### **NMDOT Transit Sub-Recipient Rating and Ranking Process**

Every year, transit applications that are verified as complete are evaluated by the appropriate RTPOs or MPOs, depending on the service area to be covered by the funds for which the applicant is applying. Applicants must present their applications at each RTPO/MPO they propose to serve. Regional and statewide prioritization of transit applications will be conducted statewide. Each RTPO conducts a regional prioritization of the applications.

Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Area Program Overview:

This program assists states and localities in developing and expanding transit services in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000.

Section 5310 Program: This program is to enhance mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services.

On an annual basis, the RTPO board conducts a transit rating and ranking process for Section 5311 and 5310 funds for transit projects in the region. This process involves project applicant presentations and a ranking of the projects from the voting members in accordance with a set of criteria previously voted on and approved by the RTPO board. 5311 is a program that assists localities in developing and expanding transit services in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000. The 5310 program is to enhance mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by providing program funds projects that serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional transportation services and Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services with an emphasis on serving seniors or those with disabilities.

**The Defense Access Road program** is co-operated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) to administer funds for improvement of roadways that are deemed worthy and important to the defense of United States homeland and territory. There is no apportionment for this program, yearly, but has averaged about \$20 million in funds since 1957 per year.