

US ROUTE 380 IN LINCOLN, NM

The Context

The 12-mile US 380 Lincoln Corridor begins at the western boundary of the Lincoln County Historic District (milepost 91.5) and ends at the eastern boundary of the Lincoln County Historic District (milepost 102.5). The Village of Lincoln is known for being both the site of the “Lincoln County War,” the last great shootout of the Old West stemming from a conflict between two rival mercantile operations, and the location of the Lincoln County Courthouse, where Billy the Kid was jailed and escaped, killing two deputies.

The project corridor has many visually prominent features, including wetland areas and waterways such as the Rio Bonito; rock outcrops such as the “Big Rock” at milepost 93.7; and the winding natural character of the US 380 corridor. US 380 is designated as the Billy the Kid Trail, a National Scenic Byway. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has classified lands near US 380 as Visual Resource Management Class III, under which changes made to the environment should not dominate the landscape. Portions of Lincoln National Forest are located both north and south of the project corridor.



Satellite map of the proposed project.

Purpose and Need

The Priest Canyon Bridge has structural deficiencies and has been prioritized for replacement. US 380 has poor pavement conditions including cracking and potholes. Vehicles regularly travel at excessive speeds through the Village of Lincoln. In addition, the sidewalk within the village has deteriorated and does not meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Many of the drainage channels and culverts are insufficient to handle flows. The village experiences periodic flooding partially because of the lack of an adequate storm drainage system in the town and along US 380.

Summary

The project corridor’s cultural resources include the Lincoln Historic District Lincoln National Historic Landmark and Lincoln National Register Historic District which contain over 80 historic buildings, as well as many scenic natural features of great local importance. The existing two-lane roadway is horizontally and vertically deficient, has poor pavement condition and drainage, and has narrow or nonexistent shoulders. The Priest Canyon Bridge, located within the project corridor, has been ranked as the top priority for replacement by New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) District 2 due to its structural deficiencies. NMDOT organized an interdisciplinary project development team to guide the process, entered into a programmatic agreement with state and federal agencies to address issues related to the historic properties, and developed a design solution that addressed the stakeholder concerns while meeting the transportation needs. Benefits to NMDOT were cost savings, probable time savings, and improved reputation and good will within the local community.

The Process

An interdisciplinary team was formed to guide the process. The team included a Project Steering Team consisting of local, regional, and state representation; a Project Management Team consisting of NMDOT and consultant staff from CH2M Hill, Inc. (design) and Marron and Associates, Inc. (environmental and public involvement); and a Stakeholder Working Group consisting of citizen and agency representation.

NMDOT knew that aesthetics would be a critical issue for the public, and the major stakeholder concerns for the project included:

- ◆ Pedestrians and replacement of the old asphalt walking path offset from the road
- ◆ On-street parking within the village
- ◆ Truck traffic and traffic calming while keeping the historic feel of town
- ◆ Bridge replacement

Several meetings involved the Bureau of Land Management to discuss connections to their proposed trail system, and with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and National Park Service (NPS) to discuss impacts to historic resources.

The recommended build alternative would include two speed control islands at the Village of Lincoln boundaries—one at the north-west village entrance and the other at the southeast entrance.

In order to conclude consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and proceed with the FONSI, NMDOT entered into a Programmatic Agreement with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), New Mexico State Monuments, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service, and the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer. This agreement calls for development of design guidelines for US 380 that preserve the character-defining features of the historic district and allows for an assessment of effects to the historic district as the design of individual construction phases are advanced.

Design Solution

Phase 1 of the design solution is the replacement of the Priest Canyon Bridge. Drainage improvements in Lincoln will follow as Phase 2 of the project. Subsequent phases will include reconstruction of the rural and village sections of US 380. The rural typical section will consist of two 12-foot driving lanes, two 2-foot paved shoulders, and an unpaved 6-foot multi-use path that would be separate from the roadway section. Within the Village of Lincoln, the roadway section would consist of two 11-foot lanes with 2-foot paved shoulders, two unpaved (base course gravel) intermittent parking lanes, and two paved 4-foot pedestrian paths. Two speed control islands would be constructed at each entrance to the village.

The multiuse path along the rural section of the roadway will connect to the proposed BLM trails, which the BLM will complete. NMDOT employed several visualization tools, including photosimulations to show how vehicles and pedestrians would encounter the roadway, aerial photos, and photos of what the drainage system will look like and where it will be located.



Photosimulation of preferred design with traffic: before (top) and after (bottom)

CSS—The Bottom Line

In addition to achieving relative consensus, the CSS process had distinct benefits for NMDOT, as identified by project staff:

- ◆ Increased coordination with stakeholders created good will for NMDOT and helped repair the NMDOT reputation.
- ◆ Increased coordination is likely to result in time saved when funds are secured to move to final design and construction of the roadway project, since stakeholders have already been heard and had their concerns addressed.
- ◆ Intensive coordination with the many agencies involved in the historic area created relationships for NMDOT staff who worked with them, which may help with future projects.
- ◆ Having a reduced shoulder width and no additional right-of-way in response to stakeholder concerns reduced the cost of the project's final design.