

## **II. Project Purpose and Need**

The project purpose and need serves as the basis for development and evaluation of alternatives. The following sections briefly summarize the results of the existing conditions report that is presented in more detail in the evaluation of the corridor through the rest of this report.

### **A. Project Need**

Transportation conditions identified by the Public and Project Management Team as needing additional study consisted of the following items.

The high volume and speed of traffic on St. Francis Drive have raised safety concerns for bicyclists and pedestrians using St. Francis Drive. The wide street and curb radii are also a barrier for people crossing St. Francis Drive.

The lack of sidewalks or paths in some locations along the Corridor, as well as the lack of on-street bicycle facilities, has reduced the mobility and connectivity to existing or proposed City and County bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Improving traffic operations during peak hours through increased use of alternate routes or transportation system management techniques would result in fewer delays for vehicular traffic. Intelligent Transportation System applications were also identified as an issue that if implemented could reduce congestion on the corridor.

There was strong interest in the surrounding neighborhoods for incorporating additional urban design features (reduced curb radii, wider sidewalks, street furniture, planting strips, etc.) to enhance community cohesiveness and livability/sustainability.

Promoting increased transit usage by accommodating expanded opportunities for the NM Rail Runner Express, local transit or Park-N-Ride facilities is a condition that could be improved and possibly reduce future automobile use through the corridor.

Ensuring that future growth from proposed City & County developments and improvements on other State facilities recommended by the I-25 and NM 599 Studies are considered and included in the analysis.

Develop alternatives to promote transportation options compatible with the interests of all regional governments.

#### **1. Physical Deficiencies**

Geometric features including lane widths and horizontal /vertical curves conform to general design standards.

The existing street lacks bike lanes throughout the corridor.

The existing street lacks sidewalks/pedestrian paths south of San Mateo.

The existing street lacks bus bays/bus lanes.

## **2. Travel Demand and Congestion**

Under existing conditions the overall corridor Level Of Service (LOS) for the six-lane facility is D. This is the worst level of service considered normally acceptable for an urban corridor under NMDOT guidelines. The overall corridor LOS for the forecast conditions is also LOS D, although most intersections see an increase in delay in the future.

The intersections of St. Francis Drive with Cerrillos Road and St. Francis Drive and Zia Road currently have movements that operate at LOS F in the PM and AM peak hours, respectively, resulting in high delays and long queues for these movements.

Access points on St. Francis Drive do not meet NMDOT *State Access Management Manual* requirement for intersection and driveway spacing. This leads to additional roadway friction, conflicts, and interruption of traffic flows. Elimination or consolidation of driveways would improve traffic operations along the Corridor by reducing the number of conflict points (driveways and medians).

Without improvements the future travel demand forecasts shows increased congestion and delay throughout the corridor, with considerable increases at the Sawmill Road, Zia Road and Cerrillos Road intersections with St. Francis Drive.

It is anticipated that travel demand accommodation will be a primary need of the corridor.

## **3. Safety**

Analysis indicates that crash rates along the corridor are lower than the County and Statewide average for similar roads.

There is the perception among the public that due to physical deficiencies (inadequate lane width for bicycle lanes, lack of sidewalks, proximity of the sidewalks to the travel lanes, wide crossing distances) combined with vehicle speeds and the traffic signal timing allowed for pedestrians to cross the Corridor, that there are safety issues, or at the very least, discouragement of travel by non-vehicular modes. In the five years between 2003 and 2007, there were a total of 10 crashes involving pedestrians (two fatalities), and 9 with bicyclists.

The intersection corner radii at the intersections, particularly near the South Capitol Complex, are considered to encourage high speed right turns endangering pedestrians trying to cross the street.

The Viento (or Calle Mejia) right-in/right-out access at St. Francis Drive just north of the Guadalupe Street interchange is a safety concern due to high speed of traffic on St. Francis Drive, although crash experience does not indicate a high crash rate. Due to the high speed of southbound vehicles on US 84/285, the seriousness of any crash here would likely be severe.

#### **4. System Connectivity**

St. Francis Drive has good roadway connectivity to other roadways in the corridor, but lacks integration with other modes of travel. Several City of Santa Fe bicycle and pedestrian trails (River Trail, Acequia Trail, Rail Trail, and Arroyo Chamiso Trail) cross or are adjacent to St. Francis Drive but currently do not have continuous or complementary connections in order to maximize and encourage walking and bicycling as alternatives to the automobile.

Currently there is limited local transit use along the corridor. Santa Fe Trails, the NM Rail Runner Express commuter rail service, North Central Regional Transit District, and the Northern New Mexico Park and Ride currently have routes that run parallel or on St. Francis Drive.

It is anticipated that system connectivity will be a primary need of the corridor.

#### **5. Access**

St. Francis Drive is no longer the only access route to northern New Mexico from the south since construction of the Santa Fe Relief Route (NM 599). However due to employment, government and commercial activities in the Corridor, a large amount of traffic still must utilize St. Francis Drive to arrive at their destination.

#### **6. Economic Development or Re-development**

With the advent of the NM Rail Runner Express providing service to Santa Fe from Albuquerque, the City of Santa Fe is beginning a process to evaluate and consider changes in land-use patterns to potentially encourage transit oriented or transit adjacent developments, particularly near St. Francis Drive. These developments typically have increased densities compared to current land-use, and although may reduce travel demand compared to traditional development of the same intensity, will likely contribute to increased congestion near these developments.

#### **7. Legislation**

There are no specific Legislative actions regarding the St. Francis Drive Corridor.

### **B. Project Purpose and Need Statement**

In 2005, St. Francis Drive was restriped from four driving lanes to six driving lanes south of San Mateo Road to address traffic congestion. However this restriping project reduced the shoulder width that was utilized as a de-facto bicycle lane. At that time, a commitment to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) from the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) was made to complete a comprehensive corridor study subsequent to the restriping. The purpose and need for improvements along St. Francis Drive remains the same and the St. Francis Drive Corridor Study complies with the commitment made in 2005.

*The purpose of the St. Francis Drive Corridor Study is to identify corridor deficiencies, identify alternatives to improve the corridor that address the increase in traffic congestion and enhance mobility for all modes of travel, and to prioritize potential future projects. The need for the St. Francis Drive Corridor Study is supported by the existing and projected level of service along the corridor, potential safety issues, as well as the limited connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.*