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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Cisneros ORIGINAL DATE 02/08/09
LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____
SHORT TITLE Study Barrier on Rio Grande Gorge Bridge SJM 18
ANALYST Moser

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY09	FY10	FY11	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
Total		None			Non- Recurring	State Road Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT)
Department of Health (DOH)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Joint Memorial 18 requests that NMDOT, in cooperation with the department of public safety, conduct a feasibility study on installing bridge barriers and other safety features on the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge on US 64 in Taos County to prevent suicides and accidental falls. The NMDOT shall seek cooperation from the Department of Public Safety for the study and report its findings to the Legislative Appropriation Committee by December 1, 2009.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Senate Joint Memorial 18 requests that a feasibility study be performed. No impact is expected to the operating budget since existing staff levels should be sufficient to oversee the study.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge is the fifth highest bridge in the United States (650 feet above the Rio Grande River). Suicide off the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge accounts for over 50% of all suicides in Taos County. The county is requesting assistance in developing safety barriers on the bridge to prevent future suicides and unintentional injuries:

(<http://www.santafenewmexican.com/Local%20News/Rio-Grande-Gorge-Bridge-Stopping-the-suicides>)

DOH indicates that according to American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) funded research and additional studies worldwide, prevention barriers on bridges have been effective at reducing suicide. Since suicide by jumping tends to be more impulsive in nature than some other methods of suicide, barriers help prevent suicide by providing suicidal individuals the time needed to change their minds, and to seek the treatment that might save their lives. AFSP supports the building of barriers and other physical deterrents on the Golden Gate Bridge and other bridges where suicides frequently occur.

http://www.afsp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=0AB9D157-C961-E2D5-2AC9B1B1A63AEB02)

With the appropriate barrier installed on the Rio Grande Gorge there could be a reduction of suicide attempts as well as accidental falls.

In conducting the feasibility study, NMDOT notes that the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Bridges. Therefore, any changes to the bridge design or visual aspects of the bridge will have to follow federal requirements for Historic Preservation. The process is typically time-consuming and would be expected to require a year to complete. Finally, the final design of the barrier could require structural modifications to the bridge and may take up to one year to complete.

GM/mt