

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING KEY AGENCIES TO FORM A WORK GROUP TO STUDY THE CONDITION OF COUNTY-MAINTAINED BRIDGES IN MCKINLEY COUNTY; REQUESTING THE WORK GROUP TO CREATE A COOPERATIVE WORK PLAN TO ADDRESS THE SERIOUS DETERIORATION OF THOSE BRIDGES THAT PRESENT AN UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF DANGER TO THE RESIDENTS OF MCKINLEY COUNTY AND ESPECIALLY TO ITS SCHOOLCHILDREN WHO MUST TRAVEL OVER THOSE BRIDGES TO ATTEND SCHOOL; REQUESTING THE WORK GROUP TO IDENTIFY SOURCES OF FUNDING TO ACCOMPLISH THE WORK PLAN AND TO REPORT THE WORK PLAN TO THE LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, McKinley county is responsible for the maintenance of five hundred forty-nine miles of roads and forty-eight bridges; and

WHEREAS, most of these bridges are Korean war-era "Bailey" bridges that were purchased by McKinley county as surplus from the United States military in the last century; and

WHEREAS, forty-five of these bridges are rated so poorly by the department of transportation that they are unsafe for fire trucks and rescue vehicles and, except for one of these forty-five bridges, unsafe for school buses; and

WHEREAS, in August 2013, the Gallup-McKinley county school district ordered its school buses not to use these forty-four bridges; and

WHEREAS, some of these bridges are not on county-maintained roads but are on roads maintained by the federal bureau of Indian affairs within the borders of the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, in many cases, the county does not own the rights of way for the bridges but only has an implied easement to maintain the bridges at their current level of repair; and

WHEREAS, before these bridges can be fixed or replaced, the United States army corps of engineers must approve the plans or designs as part of its duty to protect waters of the United States, and the Navajo Nation must permit the repair or replacement of some of these bridges under an implied easement; and

WHEREAS, the inspection and analysis costs for each failing bridge is estimated by the road department of McKinley county to be between one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) and two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000); and

WHEREAS, the remediation or replacement cost for each bridge is estimated to be between one million dollars (\$1,000,000) and two million dollars (\$2,000,000); and

WHEREAS, school buses that previously used these bridges now drop schoolchildren before a bridge and then turn around, while the children must walk across the bridge and on to their final destination; and

WHEREAS, some sources of funds for county roads and bridges come from the local governments road fund administered by the department of transportation and from the public school capital outlay council;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that McKinley county, the Gallup-McKinley county school district, the department of transportation, the Navajo regional office of the bureau of Indian affairs, the Navajo division of transportation, the Albuquerque district of the United States army corps of engineers and the public school capital outlay council be requested to form a work group, with McKinley county taking the lead, to study the current conditions and provide proposals for repair or replacement of bridges in McKinley county that are on school bus routes, including:

A. a recommended work plan to determine the actual cost of a full analysis of the condition of failing bridges and a time line for that analysis;

B. recommended strategies for the repair or replacement of failing bridges;

C. identification, assessment and recommendation of potential funding sources to conduct the analysis and to accomplish repair or replacement of those bridges to meet legal standards for emergency vehicles and school buses; and

D. recommendations for immediate and interim

actions to address the situation of schoolchildren being dropped off at failing bridges prior to their final destinations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a written report of the work group's study, work plan, strategies and recommendations be submitted to the appropriate legislative interim committees, the legislative finance committee and the governor; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the chair of the McKinley county board of commissioners, the director of the Navajo region of the bureau of Indian affairs, the secretary of transportation, the commanding officer of the Albuquerque district of the United States army corps of engineers, the director of the Navajo division of transportation, the superintendent of the Gallup-McKinley county school district, the chair of the public school capital outlay council and the director of the northwest New Mexico council of governments.