

A MEMORIAL

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REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION AND THE NEW MEXICO
CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO RECOGNIZE THE SPIRIT 54
ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT ENHANCED FEDERAL FUNDING FOR
DEVELOPMENT OF UNITED STATES HIGHWAY 54 AS A NATIONAL TRADE
CORRIDOR.

WHEREAS, transportation officials, local community leaders and business
leaders in the states of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico have developed
the southwest passage initiative for regional and interstate transportation (SPIRIT)
and are working to obtain enhanced federal funding for development of United
States highway 54 as a national trade corridor; and

WHEREAS, United States highway 54 is a major national trade corridor that
crosses New Mexico for a distance of three hundred fifty-six miles, with one hundred
thirty-nine miles of four-lane and two hundred seventeen miles of two-lane roadway;
and

WHEREAS, United States highway 54 connects three major interstate
highways, interstate 35, interstate 40 and interstate 10, and crosses four states; and

WHEREAS, United States highway 54 is a natural North America Free Trade

Agreement corridor, beginning at the bridge of the Americas at El Paso, Texas, the second-busiest United States border crossing, and running through Kansas City, allowing travelers to continue to Omaha, Des Moines, Minneapolis, Chicago and points northeast; and

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WHEREAS, United States highway 54 serves as a collector route, intersecting many major corridors such as ports-to- plains in Texas, and relieving some of the congestion on interstate 35 and interstate 25; and

WHEREAS, United States highway 54 is an important military route serving Fort Bliss, Holloman air force base, White Sands missile range, McConnell air force base and major aircraft plants in Wichita, and providing a connection to Fort Riley; and

WHEREAS, United States highway 54 is a short route from the southwest to the midwest, saving travelers up to one hundred eighty miles versus alternate interstate routes; and

WHEREAS, United States highway 54 is the most heavily traveled two-lane highway in the United States, with up to forty percent of its traffic being heavy commercial traffic; and

WHEREAS, the Kansas department of transportation projects the route's vehicle count to be sixteen thousand at the Kansas-Oklahoma state line by the year 2023, with four thousand of that being heavy commercial vehicles; and

WHEREAS, United States highway 54 had the highest accident count and the most injuries and fatalities of any two-lane highway in New Mexico during the 1998-2000 period, based on New Mexico department of transportation statistics, and other states have experienced similar numbers of accidents with fatalities on United States highway 54; and

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WHEREAS, United States 54 from Wichita to El Paso is seven hundred forty-one miles, including five hundred twenty-three miles of two-lane and two hundred eighteen miles of four-lane highway, and the cost of building roads through this area of the United States is among the lowest in the nation due to fair weather, the sparsity of rivers, flat terrain and other favorable features and conditions; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is already enhancing its road improvement efforts by including funding for the Tularosa to Santa Rosa segment of United States highway 54 under Governor Richardson's investment program;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico department of transportation, the federal highway administration and the New Mexico congressional delegation be requested to recognize SPIRIT and support enhanced federal funding to further develop United States highway 54 as a national trade corridor, providing for safer, more efficient transportation of people and goods; saving valuable travel time, money and lives; and providing important economic

development infrastructure for New Mexico and its sister states of Kansas,

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Oklahoma and Texas; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to
the New Mexico secretary of transportation, the federal highway administration and
the members of the New Mexico congressional delegation.

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