

NOTE: As provided in LFC policy, this report is intended for use by the standing finance committees of the legislature. The Legislative Finance Committee does not assume responsibility for the accuracy of the information in this report when used in any other situation.

Only the most recent FIR version, excluding attachments, is available on the Intranet. Previously issued FIRs and attachments may be obtained from the LFC office in Suite 101 of the State Capitol Building North.

FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Cisneros DATE TYPED: 03/8/01 HB _____
 SHORT TITLE: Replace Taos County Pilar Bridge SB SJM 36/SCORCS
 ANALYST: Valdes

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY01	FY02	FY01	FY02		
			NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

State Highway and Transportation Department

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Committee Substitute

Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee Substitute for Senate Joint Memorial 36 requests that the State Highway and Transportation Department assist Taos County in finding a way to replace the bridge across the Rio Grande in the Village of Pilar.

Significant Issues of Senate Joint Memorial 36

The State Highway and Transportation Department no longer has the Local Government Technical Assistance Bureau in place to provide assistance to Taos County. Department staff could inform Taos County officials of the various funding possibilities and the procedures for obtaining any available funding. Additionally, department engineers could provide some technical expertise regarding environmental requirements, bridge specifications and a cost estimate. Because the department does not have staff available for this function any longer, the assistance provided to Taos County would have to be significantly limited.

An alternate funding source other than State Road Funds, such as General Fund or Severance Tax Bonds would allow the County to contract with a consulting engineer to assist with project design and construction oversight.

Senate Joint Memorial 36/SCORCS – Page 2

Synopsis of Original Bill

Senate Joint Memorial 36 requests the State Highway and Transportation Department prioritize replacement of the bridge that crosses the Rio Grande at Pilar, in Taos County.

Significant Issues

According to the State Highway and Transportation Department, this bridge (Structure number 8656) which crosses the Rio Grande at Pilar is located on Taos County Road 108 and is owned and maintained by Taos County. The replacement cost of the bridge is approximately \$1 million with a four to five year development process.

This bridge is not on the New Mexico State Highway system nor is it listed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, the department's six-year expenditure priority plan.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Replacement cost of the bridge is \$1 million. The State Highway and Transportation Department cannot initiate the bridge replacement because it is not on the state road system and is under the ownership of Taos County. The department recommends that Taos County apply through the Regional Planning Organization for federal-aid bridge replacement funds, which require a 20% local match. Other funding sources administered by the department which could be considered are the Local Government Road Fund or the State Infrastructure Bank.

Additionally, the project could be funded by the State General Fund or a Severance Tax Bond authorization.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The bridge structure has significantly deteriorated since it was built nearly fifty years ago, preventing school buses, emergency vehicles and propane service trucks from crossing due to weight limitations. The limited access of the bridge is a major problem for the eighty residents that live on the west side of the river and could be dangerous to a significant number of rafters who cross under it from early spring through late fall each year.

The bridge is 12 wide rail to rail, 210 feet long and sits 6 ½ feet above low water levels and 3 to 4 feet above high water levels. Bridge maintenance has been neglected resulting in holes through the roadbed. Wood rot is occurring, causing deterioration of the structure. There is concern that a high spring runoff could destroy the bridge.

Recent fires on the west side of the river could not be accessed by fire trucks due to the limited capacity of the bridge. Several residents have suffered property losses to fire. There is concern that an emergency situation could cause loss of lives as well. Residents wanting to build on the west side of the river will not be able to get cement trucks and building materials across the river. Replacement of this bridge is critical to the health and safety of the residents of the area.

MV/ar/njw