

**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
US 491 South Corridor Improvements**

FLH-NH-(GRIP)-491-1(20)15, CN 3274 (Segment 1, Roadway);
NH-(GRIP)-491-1(4)17, CN 3301 (Segment 1, Bridge);
AC-GRIP-(NH)-491-1(6)22, CN G5B16 (Segment 2);
AC-GRIP-(NH)-491-1(7)31, CN G5B26 (Segment 3); and
AC-GRIP-(NH)-491-1(8)37, CN G5B36 (Segment 4).

The US 491 South Corridor begins at Navajo Road 9 (N 9) near MP 15 and ends one mile south of the NM 134 intersection in Sheep Springs near MP 46. The purpose of the proposed US 491 South Corridor Improvements is to improve travel safety, meet existing and future travel demands, enhance mobility and access along the route, and establish a link that supports the regional transportation system and long range planning goals. This project appears on the year 2006-2011 NMDOT Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). An agreement between the Navajo Nation and NMDOT regarding right-of-way will be developed.

Local community concerns and needs were sought and addressed to the extent practical during planning and preliminary design. The scope of the selected alternative is to develop US 491 as a 4-lane facility in place of the present 2-lane facility from MP 15 to MP 46. When completed, the US 491 South Corridor Improvements will provide the final link in a continuous 4-lane facility from Gallup to Shiprock, NM, a total distance of 92.5 miles. The project will include the following major elements:

- Two new driving lanes will be constructed adjacent to the existing 2-lane facility as follows: a west alignment from MP 15.0-22.0, MP 24.0-29.6, and MP 32.5-45.0; and an east alignment from MP 22.0-24.0 (Tohatchi), MP 29.6-32.5 (Buffalo Springs), and MP 45.0-46.0 (Sheep Springs).
- Seven major intersections will be improved.
- Drainage structures will be extended, modified, or replaced as necessary.
- The new roadway will be constructed within the existing right-of-way except for approximately 10-20 acres of Temporary Construction Permit (TCP) and Construction Maintenance Easement (CME) locations and approximately 180-200 acres of additional right-of-way easement.

The FHWA has determined that the selected build alternative for the US 491 South Corridor Improvements in McKinley and San Juan Counties, New Mexico, will have no significant impact on the human or natural environment.

This FONSI is based on the Environmental Assessment (EA), Project Input Synopsis, and FONSI Request prepared by the NMDOT, which have been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the EA. The EA, Input Synopsis, and FONSI Request provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. Issuance of this FONSI provides final environmental authorization for alignment location, final design, and right-of-way acquisition of the selected build alternative for the US 491 South Corridor Improvements. Reevaluation will be required for construction to confirm that the findings of the EA/FONSI are still valid.

For
Kevin EB each
FHWA New Mexico Division Administrator

07/31/07
Date