

By Paul Appel, President, APANM

LEGISLATORS AND GOVERNOR SHOULD FIX NEW MEXICO'S ROAD CRISIS

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As often happens, a bill died in the last day of the 2025 session when time ran out and what died just might be our roads. But legislators and the governor have a chance to fix it, make our roads safer, and save thousands of jobs.

In average years, the legislators fund road construction and necessary road maintenance to the tune of \$200 million. In this year's session back earlier this year, there was only a \$65 million allocation – for maintenance alone, leaving the state's road construction and maintenance fund short by \$135 million. This has thrown road construction and maintenance operations into chaos and crisis.

What does this mean for you, the driver? Well, New Mexico's roads are not in good shape due to chronic underfunding. According to the industry TRIP report, there are \$5.6 billion in urgent but unfunded transportation projects around the state. These projects are on major highways (driven I-40 lately?) and rural roads as well. Some of these roads are just not safe. In fact, only 69% of roads in this state are certified as acceptable. In short, we have a problem.

In addition, our federal matching funds are at risk. Much of our highway funds are an 80/20 split, meaning the federal government sends us 80%, but we have to come up with the remaining 20%. If we don't come up with it, we lose it – it's that simple. The feds may give us an extension, but it won't last forever.

Then there are the jobs. Construction companies have done everything they can to avoid layoffs of hard-working New Mexicans, but it can't last forever without funding. Thousands of jobs could be lost, and companies could move their operations to other states. They have to survive, you can't fault them for that, but it could wreck our industry for a decade or more.

Other states aren't fooling around. Texas just passed a \$146 billion 10-year program for roads. Arizona a \$11.5 billion program, and Oklahoma an \$8.2 billion program. These infrastructure bills create the conditions for a solid economy. These other states are smart about the need to adequately fund their road projects. New Mexico not so much.

Luckily, we can fix it. The legislature has had record surpluses over the past five or six years, much of it incidentally coming from oil and gas revenues. Right now, we are sitting on \$300 million in 2024 reserves and \$3.2 billion in total cash reserves.

And fortunately, legislators and the governor want to do something. They are committed to proper funding of road projects for the safety of our drivers. Things just got stuck. We are calling on all parties to work together to fund our projects and get us back on track. We can catch up. But we need action now. If we wait much longer, we may have a damaging crisis on our hands.

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