



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NMDOT celebrates the opening of I-25 University Avenue Project

22-month construction project designed to improve safety and provide direct connections to Pan American Center

LAS CRUCES – The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), distinguished guests and community members cut the ribbon to officially open the I-25 University Avenue Project. The approximately \$34 million project, which has been under construction since January 2020, is designed to improve safety and traffic flow at one of the city's busiest traffic interchanges.

Trent Doolittle, a Las Cruces native and the District Engineer of the NMDOT District One office, said he was very happy to see the project completed. "Before COVID, more than 35,000 vehicles traveled this stretch of I-25 every day. With traffic continuing to ramp back up, this is the perfect time to provide better and safer traffic flow and better connections to this area of the city."

Lt. Governor Howie Morales, who kicked off the ribbon cutting, praised the project as an example of a true partnership between the NMDOT, the City of Las Cruces and New Mexico State University.

Cindy Vigue, Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration, New Mexico Division, said the project helps ensure the roadway is safe, will continue to support economic growth in Las Cruces, and is also a model for sustainability.

Jerry Paz, Chief Operations Officer for Molzen Corbin, the lead designer on the project, added the project set a new standard for sustainability by recycling demolition materials for use in backfill and construction of mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) retaining walls, use of high-efficiency LED lighting to reduce light scatter, and multi-modal enhancement through improvements to the multi-use trail system in the area as well as accommodations on University Avenue for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Local firm La Calerita Construction was chosen to build the project, which provides the following benefits:

- Adding capacity to the I-25 southbound off-ramp at University.
- Reducing traffic congestion and weaving.
- Providing direct connections to Pan American Center parking lots.
- Building two roundabouts for free flow of local traffic.
- Continuing the multi-use Triviz Trail and connecting it to the New Mexico State University (NMSU) trail system and improvements on University Avenue for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Promoting sustainability through recycling and use of energy-efficient materials.

The project also includes \$6 million in custom artwork on the bridges and walls. Local artist Collette Marie designed the artwork using an earth and seed theme to reflect the area's agricultural roots and feature animals such as the New Mexico Whiptail Lizard (our state's reptile) and the Song Sparrow. Plants portrayed include the ocotillo and agave as well as crops such as onions, pecans and cotton.

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NMDOT

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