

Historic Context and National Register Evaluation of New Mexico Department of Transportation Bridges

Historic Context and Evaluation of NMDOT Bridges

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) contracted with Parsons Brinckerhoff, Human Systems Research, and Van Citters: Historic Preservation, LLC (VCHP) to complete a survey of their system bridges throughout New Mexico to provide recommendations for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. The project was intended to provide a base for future work that would be completed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

The VCHP project team developed a historic context and methodology to aid in the evaluation process. The NMDOT gave the team an electronic copy of their national bridge database, which included 4,161 bridges. Using existing NMDOT national database fields and adding survey fields, the team created a survey database of 961 bridges dating from 1927 through 1974, which are under NMDOT maintenance responsibility. Two hundred fifty-six bridges in the database were constructed in 1953 or earlier (thus being 50 years old or older); 144 of them were under NMDOT maintenance responsibility and were field-surveyed to provide recommendations on National Register of Historic Places eligibility under Criteria A and C. Early in the project, the NMDOT and the State of New Mexico, Office of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division (HPD) determined that, as a statewide survey, it was only feasible to analyze the bridges at the national and state level of significance. Local research under Criterion A was considered beyond the project's scope.

One hundred and forty-four bridges were field-surveyed by the project team and included in the new database. Of these, 67 were recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), because they retained integrity and were associated with a specific period of bridge construction in New Mexico, or were on an important route (identified by HPD and NMDOT), or represented "the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction" (NRHP 1991, 17).



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