

**Northeastern New Mexico's Infrastructure Needs Are Great;
Planning, Cooperation and Innovation Needed to Meet the Need**

By Senator Pete Campos

The vast expanse of northeastern New Mexico — encompassing seven counties and stretching from Amalia to Mora to Vaughn — has a range of infrastructure needs that total nearly \$100 million. Water projects, heavy equipment replacement and law enforcement vehicles are just a few of the critical capital needs facing our area.

It is important to work together as a region to set priorities, use a combination of funding sources and support each other as we work to complete these projects and stimulate the economy.

Planning is pivotal because we cannot afford the haphazard approach that has plagued New Mexico's capital improvement process in the past. With proper planning and strong communication among various communities, we can work to identify local, state, federal and private sources of funding that will be necessary to create jobs and improve the economic viability of the region.

During the 2014 legislative session, I requested more than \$90.5 million for 119 projects in our region. While this list, which is available on the legislature's web site, doesn't include all of the area's needs, it does provide an idea of the depth and breadth of the infrastructure needs we face. I have worked hard and used my experience to seek out additional sources of funding to ensure that as much money as possible is available to fund these projects.

Not all of our needs will be met, of course, but I am dedicated to keep working to find ways to meet the growing water, infrastructure, health, education and public safety needs of the region.

Approval of legislation to create a capital outlay planning process, which I sponsored as Senate Bill 20, would go a long way toward improving the process by which the legislature and the governor identify, prioritize, fund and monitor infrastructure projects around New Mexico. I have advocated for this legislation for many years, and it continues to gain more support each year.

Some of the projects that will be funded this year include: the Behavioral Health Institute Long-Term Care Facility (Meadows), Bradner Dam in Las Vegas, the Luna Community College Wellness Center in Santa Rosa, critical infrastructure improvements at New Mexico

Highlands University, drainage systems and street repairs in Raton and the Mora County Complex. Funding for senior citizen projects in Colfax, Guadalupe, Mora and San Miguel counties will be on the ballot in November, and other projects in Mora, San Miguel, Colfax, Guadalupe, Quay and Harding counties will receive funding more immediately.

We've made progress in completing previously funded projects, but there are many more needs that far outstrip available resources. Thorough planning, innovative funding solutions and hard work will help us meet this growing need.

- 2 -