

22nd Rio Grande Trail Commission Meeting – Minutes

Friday, June 13, 2025 // 9 AM – 12 PM

Wendell Chino Building - 1220 S St Francis Dr, Santa Fe, NM 87505

Commissioners Present, In-Person:

- Ben Bajema – OFS Senior Advisor, EMNRD (Chair)
- Dan Carter – Continental Divide Trail, Trail Mgmt.
- Howard Gross – HG Conservation Solutions, Public 1
- Karina Armijo – Outdoor Recreations Division Director, EDD
- Michael Chacon – Tribal Environmental Justice Specialist, IAD
- Myron Temchin – Temchin Environmental Planning, Public 2
- Shannon Glendenning – Urban & Regional Planner, DOT
- Steve Harris – Rio Grande Restoration, River Eco
- Toby Velasquez – SPD Division Director, SPD
- Tucker Davidson – Audubon Society, Bird Eco

Commissioners Present, Online:

- Novela Salazar - General Counsel, TD

1. Call to Order

Chair Bajema called the meeting to order.

2. Roll Call

All Commissioners introduced themselves.

3. Approval of Agenda

Chair Bajema requested a motion to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Armijo made a motion.

Commissioner Temchin seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

4. Approval of Minutes from April 13, 2025, 21st Rio Grande Trail Commission Meeting

Chair Bajema requested a motion to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Harris made a motion.

Commissioner Velasquez seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

5. Public Comment

Chair Bajema requests that comments be kept to 2-3 minutes per person.

There was no public comment.

6. New Business

a. Updates from the Chair (Chair Bajema)

i. Creation of the Office of the Rio Grande Trail

Chair Bajema: We have successfully created the Office of the Rio Grande Trail Commission, which now lives in EMNRD and is staffed by me. We are working diligently to try to get some temporary support for these commission meeting logistics, because technically it is not within Pland's scope. They've been very gracious in helping us organize the logistics for these commission meetings. But we would like to move it towards something within the office of the Rio Grande Trail Commission. And of course, by creating the office of the Rio Grande Trail Commission, we have now been able to use the funds that were appropriated by the legislature. We have access to \$225,000, some of which we will use for hiring this temp administrative logistics coordinator. Some of it will be used for trail management workshops, some of it will be used for signage, and other things to move forward with developing segments of the trail that have been designated. And, of course, promotional material, like the bags that you see in the chairs. And second, I know we did this already very briefly, but we have a new commissioner on the Rio Grande Trail Commission. She is the general counsel for the tourism department, Novella Salazar. Novella, if you don't mind, giving a brief background, you have some relevant experience that I think you should share with the Commission. Thank you.

ii. Introduction of New Commissioner: Novella Salazar, New Mexico Tourism Department

Commissioner Salazar: Yes, thank you. Chair, as he stated, Commissioner Salazar, with the New Mexico Tourism Department. However, I started with the Attorney General's office. I did have some work on the Rio Grande compact at that time. I was also the division director for the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo division. So, I do have some work with special districts, such as acequias and land grants, as well as some work with tribal nations, and I'm excited to be part of this group. Thank you very much.

b. Developing Sub-Committees / Work Groups

i. Formalize Creation of Subcommittees

- Ben Bajema reads the proposed subcommittee purpose statements and opens the floor for discussion.
- Howard Gross and Myron Temchin suggest amendments to the mission statements, particularly for the Nonprofit subcommittee.
- Commissioners discuss the importance of cultural and environmental stewardship and the role of gateway communities.
- Carl Colonius emphasizes the need for subcommittees to review and revise the purpose statements.

Chair Bajema: Thank you, Commissioner Velasquez, so what I have in the nonprofit is I'm going to read this so we're cutting out long term framework two in the first sentence, and then also making an and then replacing that with NGO to a nonprofit organization too, and then adding into the last sentence cultural and environmental, per Commissioner Harris's comment. So let me just read that out, just so we're all on the same page here:

The nonprofit subcommittee was created to lead the development of a nonprofit organization to support the Rio Grande trail. This subcommittee will explore and recommend a sustainable organizational structure to help build capacity, coordinate resources, and ensure the trail's ongoing development, management, environmental, and cultural stewardship for years to come.

Chair Bajema: Let me read that last sentence one more time for everybody:

This subcommittee will explore and recommend a sustainable organizational structure to help build capacity, coordinate resources, and ensure the trail's ongoing development, management, and cultural and environmental stewardship for years to come.

Better. Do I have a motion?

Commissioner Carter: I noticed that the statement doesn't mention recreation or recreational stewardship in any capacity, which is a part of the Rio Grande Trail. Perhaps we add that adjective recreation, perhaps after environmental, so cultural, environmental, and recreational stewardship, or something to that effect. Or I welcome other suggestions.

Commissioner Gross: Maybe the word resource, environmental, cultural and recreation. Resource stewardship.

Chair Bajema: Is environmental and resource not redundant? Or what would resource be referring to?

Commissioner Gross: There are cultural resources, there are environmental resources.

Commissioner Temchin: Mr. Chair, an important part which we talked about last meeting, and which we'll probably talk about again today, is the development and support of gateway communities. And I think the concept of bringing the value propositions of the surrounding environment around our trail is an important incentive to the public, not only to bike and hike and run, but to see the remainder of New Mexico surrounding the trail. I'd like to see the work just for conversation to the other Commissioners, I'd like to see us get something about gateway community involvement into one of these four subcommittees. Thank you, Chair.

Chair Bajema: As a point of discussion for the commission, and maybe we can call up a special witness, Carl, to better inform us as to where gateway communities might reside within this subcommittee structure.

Carl Colonius: Thank you, Chair, yes, the gateway communities certainly would be an aspect that we would want to think about and incorporate into action items as the trail moves forward. For folks that are unfamiliar with gateway communities, thinking about a hub or a connection in a community that is close to the recreational asset. Long distance hikers refueling, you know, kind of taking a break from a trail, as well as communities that have trail systems in and around that network, into the Rio Grande trail. So I would suggest it is part of what the nonprofit should be thinking about. But just to zoom out for a second, the first line of this draft purpose statements is below our draft purpose statements for the various subcommittees. We hope to have each subcommittee review these and revise them as appropriate. I think the wordsmithing that we're embarking on might be longer than this meeting could embrace. Wordsmithing is hard, and the intention was to put these drafts in front of the subcommittees and have the subcommittees revise and formalize them in order to bring it back to the commission. Just a comment on the process.

Chair Bajema: Thank you, Carl, I think that I jumped the gun then, and we are actually the goal is to formalize the subcommittees and not necessarily formalize the missions of the subcommittees. Thank you for that clarification, and I apologize for the lapse in time of wordsmithing. So, I think with that, let's move to make a motion.

Chair Bajema: **If I can hear a motion on formalizing the four subcommittees, not necessarily their missions as written at present, but just formalizing the subcommittees as official subcommittees of this commission.**

Commissioner Davidson made a motion.

Commissioner Temchin and Gross seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

Commissioner Davidson: Mr. Chair, Commissioner Salazar?

Chair Bajema: Commissioner Salazar, since she's online, is a non-voting member of the commission today, unfortunately, but thank you. So, with that, we have formalized the four subcommittees under the Rio Grande Trail Commission. They have been meeting unofficially and doing some pre-work, and in this next section of the agenda, we're going to hear some updates from subcommittee leadership, starting first with Commissioner Chacon from the tribal engagement subcommittee.

c. Subcommittee Reports

i. Tribal (Commissioner Chacon)

1. Meetings with Pueblo of Santa Ana, Pueblo of Sandia (Alignment Concerns: NM 165: Camino de Tecolote to NM 536)

2. Scheduled meeting with Pueblo of San Felipe

3. Conversations about meeting with Pueblo of San Ildefonso, Santo Domingo Pueblo/Kewa

- Michael Chacon provides an update on the Tribal Engagement subcommittee's efforts to consult with various pueblos and tribes.
- Chacon highlights the importance of tribal consultation and the challenges faced in aligning the trail with tribal concerns.

- Chacon mentions ongoing efforts to set up meetings with Pueblo Santa Ana, Sandia, and San Ildefonso
- The subcommittee aims to ensure that the trail does not disrupt culturally sensitive sites and to work collaboratively with tribal leaders.

Commissioner Chacon: Thank you, Chair. I'll start by thanking Chair Bajema, the commission and our Pland partners for respecting the tribal consultation process and tribal sovereignty. If you know anything about the history of the Commission, the original iteration wasn't strong in that capacity. I think it made our job a little tougher, and I think we're making admirable progress. The goal, of course, is to inform and seek input from all of New Mexico's nations, pueblos, and tribes. The nations, pueblos, and tribes along the Rio have primacy over their reaches of the river, but all of the NPT is like to call them upstairs at Indian Affairs. They may have a lot of them have deep cultural and traditional ties to the Rio, and areas near the Rio. The current political boundaries don't necessarily mean a lot to the tribes. They may have done pilgrimages to certain spots over the centuries. If you look at the Paako Golf Club community, there's a Pueblo almost embedded in the golf community. So, we can't let ourselves be constrained by political boundaries. Thank you Chair, thank you commission. I think we're doing it right. I think we're following the intent of the State Tribal Collaboration Act and the spirit.

To get into particulars, we spoke with Pueblo Santa Ana. They have no desire to develop along the river. I think we hear that quite often, to keep the river the way it is, and they have plans on their own for there to be a wildlife corridor along their stretch of the Rio. We spoke with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of Santa Ana. They have concerns. There is a proposed alignment of the trail along New Mexico 14, next to the Paako community. And this is news to me. I learned this is how I learned about the Paako Pueblo archeological site. I had not heard that before. But we're going as far as if a trail might be along 14, we'll be on the other side of the road. We want to give lots of space to sites like these, and also those proposals to maybe go along New Mexico 165 on the east side of the mountains. And unfortunately, that goes through traditional cultural properties, not within the current political boundaries of Sandia or Santa Ana, but both of those pueblos have great concerns with anything happening along New Mexico 165, so we are trying to move away from there. We also spoke with Pueblo Sandia, and they're also generally opposed to any trail development. They have issues that have caused great concern for them with trespassing and inappropriate use of the river by outsiders. You know, you can't really fence off the Rio. It may not be generally known that certain stretches of the river are, you know, under the primacy of Sandia Pueblo, and it's a cultural insult for them to see people frolicking, recreating in their river, which, you know, it's more for ceremonial, traditional purposes, and the hope if trail development occurs, it's further away from their land in the river. They

do not like the current alignment through Corrales and Rio Rancho, and they would like it further away from the land and the river.

After several attempts with the Pueblo of San Felipe, we've made several attempts to set a mutually workable date, and it looks like we're tentatively scheduled to meet on July 14. We're looking forward to that, and we reached out to Pueblo Pojoaque. Their first response is that they're happy to defer to the Pueblos that are able to participate. But Chair Bajema is going the extra mile, and we're still trying to set up a face-to-face to keep them informed. We've reached out to Pueblo San Ildefonso, and Lieutenant Governor Martinez of San Ildefonso is trying to set us up with their Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and he's going to try and sit in also. Their traditional name essentially means where the river cuts through. This is a foundation of their very culture. And we want to listen very carefully to everything that you know, the Riverside tribes have to say. So I'm very much looking forward to of San Ildefonso. I was in their environment and Cultural Preservation Department for about 18 years. It's a fantastic culture, wonderful people, and looking forward to talking with them again. And we've reached out chair, if you'll remind me, where are we with Kewa? Where are we with Santa Domingo? In process. We're in the process with quite a few. So that's where we are currently. And again, thanks to everybody for your interest and understanding. And I really am. Very happy with the way this commission is approaching tribal collaboration. Thanks everybody.

Chair Bajema: Thank you, Commissioner Chacon, and obviously, we couldn't do without your leadership and expertise in the area, and making sure that we're doing it right, because that's important. Next, I'd like to go to Commissioner Carter to give us some updates from the alignment subcommittee.

ii. Alignment (Commissioner Carter)

1. Trail Segments to be Prioritized

2. Revised Designation Application

3. New Realignment Application

4. Letter of support template

5. New Trail Segments

a. Overall Process & Community Engagement

i. Designation Criteria

ii. Scope of Community Engagement

- Commissioner Carter provides an update on the Alignment subcommittee's efforts to review and revise proposed alignments.
- Carter discusses the need for an MOU to clarify responsibilities and the importance of stakeholder engagement.
- The subcommittee is working on revisiting alignments, particularly in the Middle Rio Grande area, to address community concerns.
- The alignment subcommittee is also considering the need for field trips to better understand proposed routes.

Commissioner Carter: Thank you. Chair. So, the alignment subcommittee, we've been meeting about every other week to review the proposed alignments in the master plan and also looking at some other revisions to those proposed alignments. So, as I mentioned in the previous discussion, a large part of the alignment subcommittee is just to review those proposals and do the outreach with the land managers or stakeholders, the tribes, the communities, to vet these proposals prior to coming to this commission for adoption. So, it's kind of a lot of back-and-forth, iterative work to make sure that all the pieces are in place and the legal structures are there, such as easements and support letters, and stuff like that. So, we're going to continue to review and revise that process, and in the next section, we will discuss the applications that we realized because of the lapse in Rio Grande Trail Commission meetings from 2022 until 2025 that actually was never formally approved. So, we'll be asking the full commission to review those applications and provide feedback. So, hopefully at the next September meeting, we can formally approve those applications moving forward and make sure that it's very clear what we're asking for designation. And then we will be getting to some applications or proposed sections for discussion in the next, in the previous, or in the following sections as well, as I mentioned, that was suggested for approval at the August 16, 2022, meeting, which never happened. And so, the latest meeting was in April of this year. So, just to kind of do a little bit of house cleaning, as we all know, taking a few years off can create some cobwebs in the corners. So again, we are also kind of looking at, and as we discussed, even at some of the field visits and some just, you know, outreach with the tribe and stuff, some of these routes that were in the master plan need to be revisited. Things have changed over the years, or maybe there just wasn't adequate engagement back when they were proposed. So, we're doing a lot of that cleanup to make sure that we can have an alignment that's going to work. And one other item, and this will kind of maybe go to the legislative discussion, but we've recognized that an MOU is really needed moving forward, just to clarify what this designation entails and the responsibilities of partners, just so we can have a more clear conversation with the land managers and the stakeholders as we move forward in the proposal for the Rio Grande Trail, because many of these designations will be overlapping

with the already existing trail. So, we want that to be really clear of like what that means. That's all I have, Chair.

Chair Bajema: Thank you so much, Commissioner Carter. Any questions, discussion topics?

Commissioner Gross: Two questions. One is, who else is on the committee, as we're all getting familiar with how, how we're operating, and the second is, when there are field trips, is there a way to put out an invitation to the other commission members that's seeing these sites as part of the excitement and joy of working on this on this commission?

Commissioner Carter: So, currently on the alignment subcommittee, we have myself as the chair, and then Samuel Jensen from DOT, Commissioner Glendenning from DOT, Carl Colonius, and the commission chair. That's the formal members, and then others come in as needed, per a specific alignment. Pland, Dan and Katrina, have weighed in of course, as the contractors. So we're still opening it up to other members, like we've reached out to some of our federal partners, the Forest Service and BLM, hopefully getting some of these key land managers and experts in trail development and land management to join the subcommittee. Unfortunately, the federal agencies are quite thin at the moment, so it's a big ask for them to add extra workload, but we are reaching out to others and hopefully finding specialists, or just community members, who can give local context of proposed routes. Especially, I think in the Middle Rio Grande area, it's an area where some more information would be helpful. And then up here, basically Albuquerque to Taos is an area that's complicated, and having a lot of input is going to be necessary. And to your point about the field trips, the only ones we've had so far have just been in relation to these commission meetings. But I like the idea of having some more if we have some opportunities to look at proposed routes. So, I think we should consider that in the future.

Chair Bajema: Thank you, Commissioner Carter. And just to add to that, we can't have quorum when we're not in a commission meeting or when it hasn't been substantially publicly announced, so the subcommittees have to remain five commissioners or less, and then all of the field trips unless they were, of course, open to the public as well, would have to be five commissioners or less to make sure that we're not hitting that quorum. But if you are interested in joining the alignment subcommittee, we would welcome your participation.

Commissioner Temchin: I live in Placitas, and I noticed that Commissioner Chacon mentioned in his communications with Santa Ana, which we also have a relationship with, the buffalo track NEPA process that's going on. There are five very active citizen organizations, and when we look at the map of the proposed detour away from the Rio

Grande River down the 165 to 14, there is a huge amount of community discussion going on, not only from the Pueblo and the tribes, Commissioner Chacon, but from the citizens of the community. And I would just like to be included in that discussion, since I'm a member of four of these five citizen organizations, and I feel I could bring some interesting conversation for the commission to understand what you're going to go through when we reroute away from the Rio Grande down 165. To give you an example of a major concern last night, Sandoval County published their final review of the community wildfire prevention plan. There was a huge amount of comment about that, as you probably understand, the latest evaluation in Placitas puts us at the highest level of risk relative to a wildfire. And so that needs to be considered if we're going to route our visitors on the trail through a neighborhood that's designated extreme high risk for wildfire. So, there's all these other factors. I just like to reiterate if you could contact me and let me introduce you to the heads of these organizations that represent the 3000 families that live in Placitas, not the Pueblos. I'd appreciate that opportunity. Thank you. Commissioner Carter,

Commissioner Carter: There are so many pieces that go into alignment and trail management. I'm going to defer to Dan and Pland if they want to add anything specific, they're the boots on the ground who have been doing this outreach and consolidating all this information and planning any future strategic meetings with community members on specific sections. So, yeah, we welcome all that input. We're just commissioners here, and they're doing the work on the ground. So if you want to add anything to that, go ahead.

Katrina Arndt: So, on that specific alignment, we had a lot of discussions on 165, and we heard a lot of concerns. And so, our recommendation was to potentially abandon that alignment, because there are so many concerns that exist with tribal communities specifically. And we had written to the forest ranger a memo stating that we didn't get a lot of feedback because there was turnover. But that was always our recommendation to abandon that and then think about a different alignment that better works with everyone and have the right stakeholders in the room when that happens. And so, I hear those concerns. I think they are shared by a lot of different stakeholder groups, and so that is what we experienced.

Commissioner Carter: Thank you, Katrina, yes, and that's I think we the alignment subcommittee concurs with that like, I know it was in the in the master plan, but it obviously needs to be that proposed route needs to be, like abandoned at this time, and go back to the drawing board and see what some alternatives might be with the appropriate stakeholders. So, thank you.

Commissioner Temchin: Just for clarification. So, 165 is out, and the committee is working on an alternate yet to be defined?

Chair Bajema: Just as a quick reminder, go through the chair when you're addressing the committee.

Katrina Arndt: The alignment committee is the place where we discuss these things. And then I would say that Commissioner Carter will make a recommendation to the commission, and then the Commission can vote on that. We can make recommendations to Commissioner Carter. We can work on figuring out what those arguments are, bring the history to him, but the alignment committee would be the one that makes that recommendation. I don't think we have discussed how that process will work, or whether Commissioner Carter will bring up that recommendation. We need to come up with a workflow of how we address existing alignments, future alignments, what the process is to get them to the alignment subcommittee, and then to the larger commission. We are all working through these processes right now, but I think this is a great example where we can maybe test how the process will work most cleanly.

Commissioner Temchin: Commissioner Carter, I sit on four boards in Placitas. What is the message we talk about this monthly, and many people are asking, what is the Rio Grande trail going to do to our community? Can you script some kind of statement as to when there'll be a formal discussion or decision about how the trail gets around the tribes adjacent to Bernalillo, how do we get over to Highway 14, or wherever we're going to go?

Commissioner Carter: We're revisiting all options. With this particular section, the section that was proposed in the master plan is not sufficient for all the reasons that we've discussed so far. And so we're looking at different proposed alignments. I propose a working session within this community with those stakeholders, is probably due at some point. That's something for us, the alignment subcommittee, to discuss afterwards and with Pland to see what our options might be. I don't have a timeline for that, but, yeah, I think that will be discussed in the future, and there's this isn't the only section that's going to be needing reviewed. So, yeah, we're just revisiting other options, and I think we'll reach out to stakeholders when it's available. To look at those.

Commissioner Temchin: Would it be okay for me to script the two-sentence summary of what you just said? So, when I report on what this Commission is doing, do I have your permission to use certain words?

Commissioner Carter: You can just refer to the minutes of this meeting. You're welcome to quote what's in the minutes of this meeting.

Commissioner Temchin: Thank you, Commissioner Carter.

Commissioner Velasquez: I just want to provide a little clarification and take the weight of the world off of Commissioner Carter's shoulders. He can't speak on behalf of the Commission in that way. He's a subcommittee chair. He's one element of a larger commission. And so, if there's going to be statements that the commission is going to make to groups, whether it's the groups that Commissioner Temchin or anyone else is making, it has to come from the commission as a whole, from a discussion, a deliberate process and approval of the commission, and then the outreach. So I think we're so far, we're putting too much pressure on a subcommittee chair that has no authority to speak on our behalf. In that way, if we want to develop a statement as a commission that can be used in general regarding the fact that we are revisiting alignments, and we'll have information to share in from future meetings. I think we can do that, and I think the chair can work on that independently, if we authorize him to do that as a commission. But, you know, developing comments from committee levels or anything like that that gives guidance or speaks on behalf of the commission, I think, is out of order. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Commissioner Temchin: Commissioner Chair, I'd like some clarification, and based on the recommendation from Commissioner Velasquez, what would be a response to the multiple citizens' associations and alliances that are actively looking at us in other areas, in development of recreation areas, the widening of Route 165 for a bicycle trail. The development of a Placitas wildfire recreation alliance where we would cut barriers and reroute roads. All of this activity is ongoing, so I would like to propose that you, as chair, develop a short, specific statement consistent with the governance and rules of this committee that could be released to the public if that's appropriate. Thank you.

Commissioner Velasquez: Commissioner Temchin, I believe you can make that in order of a motion, we can all approve that and give the authority to the Chairman to speak on our behalf in that way.

Commissioner Temchin: I make a motion that the Commission chair develop a short statement as to the current status of consideration of the Rio Grande trail alignment relative to its pathway near or around the Placitas community. Such statement would be acceptable for release to the public. Thank you.

Chair Bajema: Do I have a second?

Commissioner Velasquez: Second.

Chair Bajema: Any discussion on the motion? Hearing none, we'll go to Commissioner Temchin.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

Chair Bajema: I will work on drafting a statement for the Placitas community regarding the trail developments around that region. Thank you.

Commissioner Temchin: Thank you, from the people of Placitas, Commissioner.

Chair Bajema: Commissioner Carter, do you have any other comments from the alignment Subcommittee on any of the updated or newly proposed templates for the Commission's consideration?

Commissioner Carter: Chair, I do not have any. We'll get to those specifics in the next couple of sections.

Chair Bajema: We're going to move on to new trail segments.

Commissioner Carter: Just some clarification. It looks like the revised designation applications and realignment applications are next. Is that correct?

Chair Bajema: Did you want to go over those?

Commissioner Carter: I don't think we need to go into detail just again to bring it up, as I mentioned in the update, of just asking this commission to look at those, provide feedback, so we can get a finalized application for the next meeting.

Chair Bajema: Thank you. So just to clarify for everyone, Commissioner Carter, we want review feedback from the Commission and the public on these, on the letter of support template, the new realignment application template, and the revised designation application template, with the goal of formalizing those in our September meeting. Is that correct?

Commissioner Carter: Yes, this is correct, Chair.

Commissioner Temchin: Commissioner, Carter, how would you like to receive the comments?

Commissioner Carter: Commissioner, please send them to Dan in the back.

Chair Bajema: What needs to be done in Section Five of the agenda? The overall process and community engagement, designation, criteria, and scope of community engagement.

Katrina Arndt: We were talking internally because some of the new alignments have not gone through a public process, and so figuring out or discussing with the Commission what steps or what engagement commissioners would like to see us go through in terms of the public process and also in terms of what criteria we want to apply to identifying preferred alignments. The initial master plan has a list of criteria that they defer to and utilize to identify alignments. And as we all know, some of these alignments are not the best or not alignments that fit all stakeholders' needs, and we may want to revisit criteria as well as outreach practices, to chart a path where we include all stakeholders from the get-go.

Chair Bajema: Thank you. And it's my understanding that in the 2018 master plan, there were a lot of community workshops and engagement. Are you suggesting something potentially similar to that on specific designation portions that we want to revisit?

Katrina Arndt: I think that would depend on whether we utilize existing trails. I think the public engagement may look a little different versus if we look at new virgin areas that have no trail on them. I think that is something we want to discuss and just see what the appetite is, what kind of outreach is seen as sufficient. We do have to consider that outreach takes a lot of resources and make decisions that make sense. But, the 2018 Master Plan neglected sufficient tribal outreach, specifically. So, we do want to keep that in mind and engage the right stakeholders sufficiently.

Chair Bajema: Thank you. I think that a good use of the Rio Grande, the Office of the Rio Grande, trail commission, those funds could be, could be used for some sort of outreach, like you're describing, specifically with tribal leadership. I'd like to open it up to the commission. If anybody has any thoughts on this, you know, some new criteria for designating and proposing trail, and also for an outreach strategy different than what we've done up to this point.

Commissioner Temchin: I can only give you an example in Placitas in the development of the buffalo tract, thanks to New Mexico Econ. Dev., thanks to Mr. Colonius and Team, we got a grant, and part of the NEPA process was to develop a travel, transportation, and management plan, which takes you to the trail, not the trail itself. There's a lot of localized community in Placitas. There's a distant community called Mustang Mesa. There are lots of wild horses up there. They're very active right now in putting gates on what they consider private neighborhood roads. And so, I think in certain areas, and I don't know where it may be appropriate to talk, not just about the trail. How do you get to the trail? Where do you park your car? Is the trail strictly for hiking, biking, or bicycling, or some other use, or some shared use. And so I would just can ask you that if you consider, in the access through well-developed communities, it may be in your best interest to have some kind of community outreach meeting where people understand there's not going to be busloads of people driving in front of my house. I mean, those are the types of scenarios we're hearing now, which is not true, but it's still a fact that needs to be addressed. Thank you.

Commissioner Glendenning: Maybe we take a step back and think about the vision that we're working towards before we start establishing more criteria. So, I think the original mission statement was from like an evening walk to a multi-day hike that can take you across the entire state. We're having talks about different segments that connect you to the river, not along the river. So maybe it's just part of like that, that revisioning, but like taking a hard look at that, and that can inform a lot of these discussions as we move forward. And what does the trail want to look like in 50 years? This is a long-term infrastructure plan, so it's a 50-year plan,

Chair Bajema: A 100-year plan.

Commissioner Carter: I think each section, in each community, in each part of the state, is going to be much different, potentially. So, we'll have, I think we can have, we'll have general criteria based on, like this vision of the Rio Grande trail, but I think each segment and community might be a different scenario with different people. So, we'll have to be a bit flexible, I think, in that regard, as far as how we approach it and how much outreach we need and how many routes we might consider.

Chair Bajema: Any other points of discussion on this topic? All right, hearing none, I'd like to move to Section Six of the agenda, which is the trail segment designation. And with that, I'd like to pass it back to Commissioner Carter to introduce these sections and walk us through what we're thinking here. Thank you. Chair.

Commissioner Carter: Maybe I misunderstood earlier. But Dan (Majewski), do you want to walk us through these applications?

6. Trail Segment Designations

a. Camino Real: Santa Fe River to Camino de Rey Road

Dan Majewski: The first section we're looking at today, because we're here in Santa Fe County, we wanted to put together a proposal for something in Santa Fe County. So there was a lot of discussion about this particular section and just about the Rio Grande trail in Santa Fe County in general. There was an initial alignment that we were looking to designate that went through the Caja Del Rio. In meeting with stakeholders, we stepped back on that. The big reason for that is because it was a one-way dead-end segment that ended at tribal land, and so there wasn't a clear way of figuring out how that trail would continue further north. So, we came up with an alternative that we think will work well with future planned trail efforts. The alternative we came up with is along Caja Del Rio road. It is a paved trail. I am wondering if our representative from Santa Fe County may be interested in sharing a little bit more about this trail, since you're more of an expert on it, thank you, if that's okay with you, Chair.

Adeline Murthy: Thanks, Dan. Chair, commissioners, my name is Adeline Murphy. I'm the open space and trails planner with Santa Fe County. The proposed section is a little bit over three miles. It's paved. It stretches from the [Santa Fe] River Trail to the city of Santa Fe's municipal recreation complex. It is maintained by the county, and the trail on the north side also connects to trail networks that go into the Caja Del Rio and to Diablo Canyon, so it could potentially serve as a connector. The river trail connection to the south is also an important connection point. The [Santa Fe] River Trail is one of the county's and city's long-term trail projects, and we are currently in the process of constructing the trail. A lot of it is done, and the rest will likely be completed in about five or six years. Another important thing to note is that much of this alignment is along the historic El Camino Real trail, and I think that covers it.

Dan Majewski: It's always better to hear from folks who are here in the community. That's the essence of it. Commissioners, you have the full application in your packet that has more context about the trail as well. I'll let you all open this up for discussion.

Commissioner Carter: Thank you, Dan and Adeline, for the presentation there. As a matter of process, we do recognize that this section currently doesn't have the letters of support from the existing land managers, City of Santa Fe, the Santa Fe County. Also, it is along the Camino Real National Historic Trail, which is managed by the National Park Service. But we thought it would be a good example to bring up at this meeting as to how we are revisiting alignments and being flexible and changing that master plan and reconsidering new alignments in different ways. So, recognizing there's still some discussion with those managers and stakeholders to like, I think formally make this work. But thought it was be, it was applicable to bring this up here, since we're in Santa Fe, and also that this is a refinement of the process as we move forward.

Chair Bajema: If I can add Commissioner Carter, this is a refinement of the process based on stakeholder feedback. So that's an important thing to know in this alignment as well.

Commissioner Gross: Chair, where would future segments of this trail to the south go? The maps are helpful, but they don't show it beyond the Camino Real trailhead.

Chair Bajema: I'll take a stab at this, but I'm sure Dan and Commissioner Carter have more to add to this. The goal is to connect this segment of trail up and around Santa Fe, through the National Forest, potentially, and to Taos, is the ultimate goal. And I think that we would also like to support the city of Santa Fe in building out their efforts to, you know, make a more robust river trail that would also feed into the future Rio Grande trail alignment. Mr. Colonious.

Carl Colonius: It was identified that the Master Plan segment, or the alignment in this section, did take you to the river, but there was no means of crossing the river. And if you did cross the river, you were in sovereign land, and we certainly didn't have permission to extend it at that point. The original master plan, they left scratching their heads. So pulling back from that, the alignment that uses the Santa Fe River Trail as a draft. And again, part of the process that we're talking about here is taking that back out to community input in order to fully vet, get the local expert opinions on that proposed change of alignment. And just to talk a little bit about the workflow between the subcommittees and Pland Collaborative and the Outdoor Recreation Division, I don't want to open up the fire hose of tasks that come from subcommittees to plan to that have reasonable capacity, but we don't want to overwhelm that scope of work. So, talking about how that workflow happens is an important acknowledgement. And as an example, the tribal subcommittee had a

conversation with Sandia Pueblo. Sandia Pueblo identified some sensitivity around some alignment boom, the tribal subcommittee makes a reference or sends an email to the alignment committee. The alignment committee picks up that conversation, engages with Pland, with acknowledgement of the outdoor recreation division that some community outreach and a conversation needs to be convened. We convene that conversation, draw the information out, and bring a recommendation back to the full commission. Maybe it's in a designation, maybe it's in a realignment, but looking at how those gears fit together is an important step for the commission and for the community, and again, I strongly encourage the community to engage in the subcommittee structures. It's a great opportunity to, you know, kind of have your voice more readily available, and sit at the table to help make these recommendations back to the commission. So, the alignment that we are considering adding to the master plan would be routing on the Santa Fe [River] Trail, moving up through Santa Fe, which should be a benefit to the city of Santa Fe. They've got that trail concept and a lot of it on the ground already. And then we can move into the Santa Fe National Forest to move around the sovereign land that, if you think about it from Buckman through Espanola, you're not going to be able to avoid sovereign land unless major deviation, either to the west or to the east. So path of least resistance using the Santa Fe Trail to get up into the Santa Fe National Forest, Santa Fe National Forest, moving up into the Carson National Forest. And then there's connectivity into the Bureau of Land Management, Taos field office land, connecting into the Taos Valley overlook, Rift Valley Trail System, and further north from there. So, it's connecting the dots, plugging the pieces together, and stepping back from the master plan, that is not written in stone. It's not even written in pen. I would suggest it's written in chalk, which is pretty easy to erase. So, the workflow is a great kind of concept that we want, and I want to appreciate Myron. We're going to hear about this kind of collaborative organizational structure as let's put the pieces on a piece of paper and see how they play. I know that kind of went wildly beyond the question, there

Commissioner Carter: Thank you, Carl. And I think revisiting that workflow is something we should do in a future alignment subcommittee. Speaking of the tribal lands, we're talking about lands currently managed by the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, but these are native lands, and there are connections there. So still, even on these, like federal public lands, that outreach is still needed, and there are still sites there, and they hold strong significance as well. Just because it might be managed by a different agency, there's still a relationship there, and we need to honor that and keep that outreach going, even on these currently non-sovereign lands.

Chair Bajema: So, what I'm hearing is that this Six A segment is not ready for designation today, or should we go to a motion for designation?

Commissioner Carter: Chair, I don't think it's necessary to go forward with the motion for designation today. We recognize, in the last meeting, and this meeting, that as a matter of process, we want to make sure we have all that documentation before we move forward. Based on the field visit yesterday, there's still some discussion with stakeholders that we should have before we designate this. It's a good example of the process as we move forward. So hopefully in a future meeting, we can consider this.

b. Cebolla Mesa, Taos

Chair Bajema: I'd like to move to 6B, the designation of the Cebolla Mesa trail in Taos.

Dan Majewski: So, this particular section of trail should be familiar to the commission. This was on our last agenda at the last commission meeting. The discussion was centered around the fact that there were no letters of support for this section of trail. Just to quickly review, this is a section of existing trail in the National Forest. This is north of Taos, and it's just south of an existing designated section of trail through the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument. So, you'll see in your packet that we do have, in writing, support from Amy at the National Forest Service. She sent us a message saying she approves of it. You can see that we wanted to use this to model how the letter of support format could work. As Dan Carter said, we want to get your review on this format before final approval. And you'll see there's also a reference to the Mayor of Questa wanting to be involved in the conversation, and we have been told that he was involved in the conversation. And I don't know if there are any commissioners who want to speak to that.

Commissioner Armijo: Yes, chair. I spoke with the Mayor of Questa a couple of weeks ago just to make sure that this was on his radar, and he understood, and this is part of the conversation that we're having. This master plan was done in 2018. He had heard about it through different points of outreach through the years, whether it was the Uplift project that ORD was involved with, or other ways that outreach happened in that area. But a mayor in Questa has a lot going on, so even that touch point of calling him and letting him know that this was on the agenda, he was very supportive of that. So, it's just a reminder that since 2018, a lot has happened, and outreach needs to keep going in different ways. So, he very much approves, is excited, and definitely welcomes outdoor recreation in that area.

Dan Majewski: Thank you, Commissioner Armijo. So, with that, I will open this up for discussion within the Commission. Thank you.

Commissioner Glendenning: Mr. Chair, I just want to thank everybody for once, we tabled this last meeting, bringing it back, and spending the time to get the support. I think it's going to really help the process, and this is great.

Chair Bajema: Any other notes or discussion on this segment? All right, hearing none. **Do I have a motion for approval for designating this section of the Cebolla Mesa Trail in Taos as part of the Rio Grande Trail?**

Commissioner Harris: So move.

Commissioner Velasquez: Second.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

Chair Bajema: Fantastic. With that, **we have officially designated the Cebolla Mesa Trail as part of the Rio Grande trail.** Congratulations, everyone. Good job. And just as a process, reminder, so the commission has now designated this, but by designating, we bring this segment of trail to the Secretary of EMNRD for official designation as part of the state trail system. And so that will entail a public meeting held in Taos for official designation as part of the state trail system. And then from that point forward, we can start doing signage or any other sort of maintenance and construction that is necessary. Fantastic. Next, I'd like to move to Section 6C of the agenda. This is also a segment of trail

that was tabled at the last Commission's meeting. It is County Road A005, in Truth or Consequences, and I'd like to pass it back over to Dan just to give us some updates on how that's progressed since our April meeting.

c. A005, Truth or Consequences

Dan Majewski: So, as the Chair noted, this should also be a familiar section of trail. At the last meeting, there were requests from the Commission to get some more letters of support, more written evidence of support about this trail, which we were able to get. So, first, included in your agenda is the support from the city of Truth or Consequences. In there, you can see the section from their commission meeting, the city's commission meeting, where they discussed and approved designating that section of trail. Following that in your packet, you'll see a signed resolution from Sierra County, which is where this trail is located. So, there is full support from Sierra County. And then following that, also modeling the letter of support template, we have some additional context from Amber Vaughn, who is the Sierra County Manager. There were a couple of emails that she sent that clarified that there were no existing easements recorded, and the vehicle count per day. And I did want to just point out and emphasize the description of how they're collecting that data. So, they're estimates. I just wanted to be clear about that, because based on our observations when we were out there, this seemed like a slightly higher number than we expected. So, I just wanted to point that out to everyone.

Chair Bajema: Dan, I think that "slight" is an understatement. We saw one bicycle during the time that we were out there, which does not indicate that there is a daily usage of 400 vehicles per day.

Commissioner Carter: Thanks for noting that about the counts. It also jumped out at me, and it does mention that that was through GPS enabled mobile devices, also known as cell phones. So, I'm curious if that might include recreational use, because a lot of recreationists use their cell phones to track their recreating so I'm really curious if that actually might be inflated because of the recreational use.

Dan Majewski: Thank you, Commissioner Carter, for that comment. I think that's a pretty good guess. So, with that, that's all the additional information we have about the segment. Now, we'll open it up for discussion among the commission. Applause,

Commissioner Temchin: I wanted to make a note for usage. There's a publicly available website called trails fork, and when you go to trails fork, you can dial in the county the trail, and believe it or not, they have a usage meter on every trail, and they have a subdivision of what the usage was about, biking, hiking, walking, jogging, horseback riding. So, you may be able to find some usage information to support this in 15 minutes by going to all trails or

trails fork, either of those have publicly recorded usage. Now, is it valid or not? That's another story, but it may support what you think. It may be a piece of an independent third-party record. So just to offer that source, Dan, thank you.

Commissioner Carter: I think it's probably mentioned in here, but as some of us got to see at the last commission meeting on the field trip, this connects over to Rotary Park, where they have a proposed pedestrian bridge that will connect the city over to this section of the trail and some BLM public land. So, there's already some future development in the works of connecting this directly into the community as well.

Chair Bajema: And to that point, Commissioner Carter, I think that the designation of this trail will accelerate the development of that bridge. All right, any other, any other comment from the Commission on this segment of trail? All right, hearing none. **Do I have a motion to approve the designation of A005 County Road in Truth or Consequences?**

Commissioner Carter: I motion to approve.

Commissioner Velasquez: Second.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

Chair Bajema: And with that, **we have adopted this segment of trail into the Rio Grande Trail.** Thank you to Pland for doing your due diligence and really responding strongly to the Commission's request for more information. And I think that the additional information you provided really strengthened the recommendation. Next, we'd like to move to a new

segment of trail. This is Section 6D of the agenda, Socorro Valley Bosque Trail, and I'd like to pass it to Katrina to talk us through this segment.

d. Socorro Valley Bosque Trail

Katrina Arndt: Thank you. Chair. So, this trail segment has been in discussion for a long time. We have been working with the city of Socorro and with their trail organizations on projects along within that area. There was always a barrier because of MRGCD's MOU with them, but they just signed a new MOU with MRGCD to allow the use of this trail. And so this trail is a three-mile trail along the river. It also connects into a larger network of trails and is utilized a lot by the community. They have a few parks along this trail that the community uses, and it also serves to give river access for river use. So, there's a lot of history with this trail, even though it's just now being brought to the commission, but I'm personally very excited. There are a lot of stakeholders involved from the community who utilize trails and also bring a lot of events to the Socorro area for trail use. So, the city of Socorro has recognized recreation as an asset for them, and they are trying to develop it for their purposes and to develop their local industries. I wanted to provide a little bit of history, because there has been a lot of work that we have been doing over the last three years with the community. There was a lot of discussion prior to this, so I wanted to highlight that.

Dan Majewski: Thank you, Katrina. So yes, what you will find here in the packet, you'll find quite a bit of support for the trail. The first piece of support that you'll find is a signed letter of support from the city of Socorro. So, it says in here that they both support it and that they are going to continue being responsible for this section of trail, because that is often a question that comes up when we're designating, who's going to be responsible for it, so they've noted their continued support for doing so. The next attachment you'll find is an MRGCD license agreement. This is something that will get into more detail on, I think, in the next section of the meeting when we talk about legislative updates, but essentially, it shows that MRGCD is very much in support. And to build on that, the last attachment is a signed letter of support from MRGCD themselves. It summarizes that they support designating this section of trail. And so, with that, I will hand it back to the Commission for discussion.

Commissioner Carter: Thanks, Dan. I'm curious, are y'all familiar with these parks that it connects? I think that's a cool feature. What happens in these parks? What kind of infrastructure do they add to the trail, and what goes on there?

Katrina Arndt: There are, I think, seven parks. Some of those parks are utilized a lot. Others are not. So, the city has also strategies to decommission some of them and focus more energy on others. They are mainly used for day-use activities. They have fire pits, which I

don't know whether that's the best idea, but people are pretty responsible. There is one at one end of the trail that also allows camping. So that is, I think, awesome, because if we look at long-distance usage of the trail, we do need camping facilities. So, there's on one end where camping is allowed, and then some of them are used to access the river. They have some issues with illegal dumping, and so the city is trying to address that. I think if we get more people on the trail, that may discourage or eliminate some of those issues, but the city is working actively on improving some of them and decommissioning some of them to address some of the dumping issues.

Commissioner Carter: So, there is some infrastructure at some of the parks.

Katrina Arndt: I can circulate some more images if the commission is interested. They have benches, fire pits, tables, and trash receptacles. That was also where the city was trying to identify areas where they could have trash receptacles that are emptied more often. They're actively working on addressing either improvement or decommissioning.

Chair Bajema: Are they granting an easement or a right of way to EMNRD that includes the parks?

Katrina Arndt: The MOU they have with MRGCD includes the parks. So, all those uses have been happening for quite a while. I don't know how long this agreement has existed, but MRGCD provides some funding to the city to help maintain that area. But the city has been maintaining them for a while, including the trail.

Commissioner Harris: Is this utilizing the levee road system?

Katrina Arndt: No, it's soft surface trails. They're mainly utilized by walking and also mountain biking. I don't think they're accessible. Some of them are pretty flat, but on some of them you have to get over the levee road, so, like, over a bump to access the trail.

Commissioner Harris: So, this is within the levee, then.

Katrina Arndt: It is adjacent to the levee.

Chair Bajema: But not within the levee, it's on the outside.

Katrina Arndt: Yes.

Commissioner Davidson: Mr. Chair, it does look, from the map, that it does run along the levee road on the southern section. I know that northern section kind of winds through the Bosque. That southern section looks like it does follow the levee road, adjacent to the low flow channel.

Katrina Arndt: I'm not 100% familiar with all the segments of the trail. I've walked some of it, but it is an existing trail. It looks like yes, you're right.

Commissioner Chacon: Mr. Chair, Katrina, I've noticed under accessibility, the second sentence states to trail is gravel and sometimes inaccessible. Do we know what that means? Why is it inaccessible?

Katrina Arndt: I think the inaccessible refers to it not being ADA compliant. I think the levee road portion would be more accessible, but it does go down into the bosque with the trail meandering around. I don't think that it is ADA accessible.

Chair Bajema: Commissioner Chacon, the way that I interpret it, in addition to what you just mentioned, is that it would be hard to roll a wheelchair on a gravel segment where there are inclines and declines, and so I think that is the intention of what's written in that segment. Please correct me if I'm wrong.

Dan Majewski: Yes, that is correct, and this is a good opportunity to give another plug to the revised designation application, which helps to clarify these types of things through a checkbox-type format. It should be a little bit easier to understand. But yes, when we say accessibility, we don't mean that you can't physically access it. It's a reference to wheelchair accessibility.

Chair Bajema: Any other comments from the Commission on this segment of trail? Hearing none, **do I have a motion for designation?**

Commissioner Gross: So move.

Commissioner Temchin: Second

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

Chair Bajema: **The motion passes.** We have designated a third segment of trail to the Rio Grande Trail Commission. That concludes our trail segment designation portion of the agenda. Next, I'd like to turn to Commissioner Davidson to walk us through the legislative subcommittee updates.

iii. Legislative (Commissioner Davidson)

1. 2026 Legislative Proposal Development: Amending the Rio Grande Trail Commission Act to release liability for special district for public usage of trail hosted on their land.

2. Meetings with MRGCD; EBID; legislators

Commissioner Davidson: Yeah, so the legislative subcommittee we've been working mostly, as chair Bajema said earlier on, limiting liability or clarifying liability for the special irrigation districts, particularly MRGCD and Elephant Butte Irrigation District. We've got about 150 plus miles on that land, so it's good that we limit liability for these districts. Our strategy for it is to amend a statute in the New Mexico State Trails Act. It's really just one line. The state trails act already says no person or corporation or their successors and interest who has granted a right of way or easement across his land to the mineral energy minerals and Natural Resources Department for use in the state trail system, shall be liable to any user of the trail for injuries suffered on the right of way or easement unless the injuries are caused by the will for wanton misconduct of the grantor. All we're doing is basically adding right after person or corporation, saying or political subdivision or special district of the state, including irrigation and Conservancy District. So, it's a pretty simple amendment. We have been talking with MRGCD and Elephant Butte Irrigation District. They do have some concerns about liability. I think MRGCD has gone bankrupt five times in the past 18 years. So, we think it's a necessary step. We've also been talking to Senator Brantley and Representative Kathleen Cates, two co-sponsors of this amendment, to bring to the floor. Chair Bajema also talked to Juliana Coob Recently, who represents the trial attorneys so people that have interest in these injury cases, and Juliana Coob was under the impression that MRGCD is already kind of waived, or like limited liability under the tort claims act. So, this would double down on that and provide some extra protection for them. And so, yeah, that's, that's kind of where we're at right now. So really wanted to get

approval from the rest of the commissioners on this plan of attack or the strategy moving forward.

Chair Bajema: Commissioner Davidson, that was a great overview. If I can just add a just a little more color, we are not trying to enhance the limits of liability for anyone. We are not trying to change who is liable. We are merely trying to clarify that when a special district grants an easement or a right of way to EMNRD to be designated as part of the state trail system, that they are also allowed to receive those limits on their liability, except for the willful or wanton misconduct of that special district. So, if there is gross negligence, there is still a pathway for the injured individual to pursue legal action. But per the state trails act, there is a liable entity, that being the secretary of EMNRD, who would oversee, per the state trails Act, the management, maintenance, and policing of state trail systems. So we just want to make that clear, and we see it as a really critical step to get special district buy in and participation in this process, because, as Commissioner Davidson mentioned, there's hundreds of miles of trail that have been proposed on special district controlled lands, and if they are not able to participate in this process, and the trail has to deviate substantially from the Rio Grande River across hundreds of miles, I think we have a bigger problem on our hands. So, for this effort to move forward, we see this as a critical step, and we would love the Commission's support on this initiative. One other note of context for kind of the logistics of all this. EMNRD has submitted our proposed legislative ideas to the governor's office on June 1. We are eagerly awaiting feedback on those proposed legislative items, one of them being the clarification of this amendment in the state trails act. So, if there's any other discussion from the Commission, any clarifying questions?

Commissioner Glendenning: The question that's come up a couple of times in today's meeting was granting an easement to EMNRD for use of the trail. What exactly is the easement for?

Chair Bajema: To designate something as part of the state trail system, which, as I read the legislation, the Rio Grande trail ultimately will be a State Trail, the owner entity of the portion of trail that will be designated must designate a right of way or an easement to EMNRD for use of that segment, as I understand the legislation.

Commissioner Glendenning: That includes maintenance? But the land management agency or owners are doing the maintenance, right? It's just for the designation? What else comes with that?

Chair Bajema: If I understand your question correctly, once a segment of trail becomes part of the state trail system. Per the State Trail Act, the Secretary of EMNRD now oversees, manages, and maintains all segments of the state trail system.

Commissioner Carter: That sounds like it creates a lot of additional work for EMNRD. I'm curious if it's been considered that the added responsibility of the secretary could also be addressed through the current land manager, through something like an interagency MOU that maybe the legislative subcommittee could address at some point.

Chair Bajema: Yes, that's my understanding as well, that the current land manager, through an MOU, can take over those responsibilities of management that the Secretary is granted per the state trails act. Yes, sir.

Commissioner Armijo: I'd like to ask Carl, because I know that ORD has been dealing with this for the last couple of years. If you have any comments or concerns about this legislation.

Carl Colonius: Yeah, this is a sticky wicket. Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Elephant Butte have concerns about their liability. How we attempt to adjust legislation in order to address those concerns, this is a strategy. We also have the recreational use statute, which is another, you know, kind of state statute that provides release of liability. If a landowner provides free and open access to their land and allows a trail to cross their land, they are relieved from liability. That legislation doesn't specify management entities like the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and in a lawsuit, let's say the 2002 Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District lost a claim. They attempted to use the recreational use statute as their defense, and the state Supreme Court provided some recommendations on adjustments to the recreational use statute. That is just another layer of protection for these entities. I will note that CEO Jason Casuga of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, his letter of support for the Socorro segment, the last paragraph reads, we will continue to evaluate each section of proposed Rio Grande trail within the middle Valley on a case-by-case basis. In this instance, we support the development of the Socorro Valley Bosque trail consistent with the terms of our existing license agreement with the city of Socorro to quote, install and maintain five riverine parks and a trail within the Rio Grande Bosque right of way owned by Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and urge all relevant agencies, partners and funders, to prioritize its advancement as part of the Rio Grande trail. So that three-mile section? Cool. They've got a license agreement. They understand that there's going to be some management and some maintenance of that. It's not really their levee Road, per se. It aligns with that, but it's a trail standing outside of their levee roads. I think the question comes up, how enthusiastic is the Middle Rio Grande conservancies district to the adjustments we're making to the state trails act, and does that allow us to then request utilization of those levee roads? And, you know, have we had those conversations with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District? Do we have a gauge of their enthusiasm? Or are we going to continue to look at it on a segment-by-segment

basis? I would love to think that with the adjustment of some legislation and lifting some heavy stones, MRGCD would say, cool. Here's the levee road alignment that we think would work for the Rio Grande trail, and with one administrative action, we gain 130-plus miles. That would be great. That would justify the amount of effort that Commissioner Davidson and the legislative committee is going through. So, I just wanted to kind of put this in perspective. I think it is a strategy, and I'm interested in how MRGCD is engaging in that discussion.

Chair Bajema: Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Colonious. We've had a meeting with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and their lawyers as well. And they expressed, as Commissioner Davidson alluded to, that they are very concerned about the liability issues, and they feel like they are not significantly or sufficiently protected against claimants coming against them. And at present, a lot of their land is not for recreational use, but even if somebody gets hurt while recreating, they still have a pathway, and have been very successful suing the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. So I think, from what we heard in our discussions with them, is that they are very supportive of this effort, and the goal of it is what you described of getting to a clear point where we can designate a much larger segment of levee Road, as opposed to, you know, three miles of trail outside of the levee road. I wanted to come back to for a little historical context on some prior legislation that you mentioned, which is the recreational use statute, which I believe falls under Game and Fish, if I'm not mistaken. That piece of legislation was attempted to be amended last year or in this past long session, and they were trying to do what we are trying to do, just adding in special districts pursuant of NMSA, 17, whatever, 1758, or something. And that legislation did not come to pass because, from the trial attorneys' perspective, they said this is unnecessary. The special districts already benefit from vast immunity under the Tort Claims Act, especially in the instance of designating an easement or a right of way to EMNRD for the purposes of recreation. So, what we're doing instead is to amend the state trails act, just to clarify that immunity exists, and still giving claimants a voice and a path forward in the courts to right wrongs. If there are other avenues or if legislation is not required, or if there are other better statutes that should be amended, I think we would really welcome that opportunity to review and look at those, because we want to put all of our efforts into the highest likely win scenario to get special district involvement in the designation process. One other question I had was, what's the difference between a license agreement and an MOU? I'm seeing that difference in language, and I was wondering if there is a substantial difference legally for the management of these potential segments.

Carl Colonius: Mr. Chair, I could take a whack at that the license agreement that we're seeing referred to in Mr. Cayuga letter is specific to a process for Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District that for \$200 a year, the city of Socorro applies for a license to utilize the recreational trail within city boundaries, but under the management of Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. So maybe akin to a special use permit with USDA for a nominal fee, defined purposes, commensurate responsibilities for maintenance, that gives MRGCD the comfort that they know that that segment does not give them exposure. There are defined uses, and a relationship with the city. In light of the larger trail, that situation is pretty unique. There are not municipalities, local units of government up and down the river corridor along our alignment that are ready to stand up and accept that responsibility. As the gears turn, we need to be anticipating how to assume maintenance responsibilities for the entirety, which then goes into the nonprofit structure that can focus on that outside of state government and in the multitude of jurisdictions along the length of the trail.

Chair Bajema: Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Colonius. Are there any other discussion points from the Commission on the legislative topic? I know it can get kind of legally quickly and a little convoluted.

Commissioner Temchin: Commissioner Davidson, in this Placitas buffalo track right now, and with the brand- new Sandoval County Commission wildfire prevention plan coming out, there's a discussion now ongoing about, in the case of wildfire, dire emergency citizens using existing trail systems as evacuation routes. So maybe I'm out of place, and please let me know. But it's a big discussion right now. Yesterday, I had a two hour meeting with the Bureau of Land Management, who oversees, Carl, the 3000 acres of the buffalo track, as to what their liability position would be if they were willing to designate, in dire emergency evacuation routes for the San Antonio de las Huertas land grant community who is land locked in the corner of highway 165 one way in, one way out, lots of trails going north that could take them away from that congestion in a dire emergency. So to summarize, I was wondering if any of this liability language discusses trail owner liability if the trails are used as an escape route in a dire Emergency. I could tell you right now, our trails are not going to be able to withstand two-wheel drive vehicles loaded with tons of stuff, people running from fire, broken down trucks. So, I was wondering if that's covered at all, and if not, does that need to be considered in the future?

Commissioner Davidson: It's not covered. That's not something that we are trying to limit liability for. Those levee roads can withstand trucks and cars driving down them.

Commissioner Temchin: I'm not just talking about this particular instance. I'm talking about all of the segments that we take from all of the land managers or owners. I'm just curious if there's a general, higher-level standard set of terms and conditions for indemnification and liability to the land owners.

Commissioner Davidson: That's not something I'm familiar with. You know, I've been really kind of honed in on this particular Mr. GCD, Elephant Butte Irrigation District.

Chair Bajema: I don't think that emergency management was considered, has been considered at all in the development of the Rio Grande trail or in any sort of our, I guess, land management discussions. Commissioner Velasquez, do any state park trails serve as emergency management corridors or evacuation routes? Is there any precedent here?

Commissioner Velasquez: I would hate for the group to get involved in doomsday scenarios. So, state parks specifically has evacuation plans that we are part of a larger network of emergency response. But I think in general, when there's an emergency response on a wildfire, it's all hands on deck, it's all access. It's saving lives, property, etc. I don't believe that there's a set agreement that State Parks has that would enable emergency responders to access a state park in order to do that, because it happens as a normal emergency operation. But we also have managing employees and law enforcement within state parks that collaborate through New Mexico State police dispatch in order to do that. So, I don't think we're a good comparison in this situation, because we have actual management of these properties. It's more than just fire, it's flooding, it's everything else. I don't know that what we've contemplated as a committee takes it to that level of natural disaster.

Chair Bajema: I would agree with that assessment. I think if we designate trail in the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, for example, I'm sure that they have some sort of emergency management planning and authority, and we would probably deviate towards their model. They are, ultimately the land managers. They would still be in control of their lands, and deviate to their emergency response, rather than sort of developing our own. Or, as Commissioner Velasquez mentioned, you know, these doomsday events are all hands on deck, very intense. I don't think we're going to be worried much about specific access when there is a large natural disaster to that effect. Does that answer your question?

Commissioner Temchin: Yes.

Commissioner Carter: I'll just add from my experience, on the Continental Divide Trail with the US Forest Service, they're the land manager, so they manage it, and they have emergency response already in place, just as an agency, especially with wildfire. Typically, with the trails, they are at the table, and they're typically used for transportation corridors

or even fire lines. I don't think we have to get into that level of detail, because within each land manager there is emergency response. The trails can kind of help advise there, so it's protected as a trail, but also we utilize it for that emergency situation.

Chair Bajema: Excellent. Thank you, Commissioner Carter. Any other points of discussion on the legislative subcommittee updates from the Commission? All right, hearing none. I'd like to go to the next point on our agenda, which is 3.4. I'd like to pass it off to Commissioner Gross to walk us through our ideas around the creation of a nonprofit subcommittee. Thank you.

iv. Creation of RGT Non-Profit (Commissioner Gross)

Commissioner Gross: I don't have anything to present today, other than saying I'm interested in chairing and working with a nonprofit subcommittee. I think we saw during our last meeting, with a presentation from Theresa Martinez from the Continental Divide Trail Coalition, about cooperative stewardship models that can really bring a lot of capacity and resources to this endeavor. I found her presentation intriguing and inspiring. I'm willing to invest time in working with fellow commissioners and other stakeholders who are interested in exploring what this could look like. Bring ideas back to this commission. I think it's a good use of my interests and experience. I've spent most of my career working with conservation NGOs in various capacities. So that's really all I have to offer.

Chair Bajema: Any questions, comments, or points of discussion from the Commission on the efforts to create a nonprofit to oversee the management of the Rio Grande trail?

Commissioner Gross: Any other commissioners, or any stakeholders, or anyone here with us virtually today, interested in collaborating on such an endeavor, on this subcommittee?

Chair Bajema: I am interested in collaborating on this endeavor.

Commissioner Temchin: I've worked on two organizations this year, Sandia Collaborative and Placitas Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Alliance. We're both creating 501c(3)s, which is particularly what those purposes fit, but I'd like to work on that committee. There's a lot of collected information already. Commissioner Gross, that could maybe help you decide quickly where you want to take this.

Commissioner Carter: I'm also glad to help advise on this subcommittee if we don't have a quorum yet, so you can count me.

Commissioner Gross: That puts us at five.

Chair Bajema: Which is perfect, good. Any other further discussion on this subcommittee topic?

Commissioner Gross: I will follow up in the next week or so and contact folks who've expressed an interest about trying to set up a first meeting.

Chair Bajema: And just for your information, Commissioner Gross, what we've been doing with the other subcommittees is holding biweekly virtual meetings. You can develop a cadence as you see fit, but that's sort of the standard we've been going for at present. A larger conversation that we should think about is that we want public participation. We want stakeholder participation in these subcommittee meetings. They're not currently accessible. They're internal teams links that we have with each other. We can strategize on some ways to put it on the Rio Grande Trail website or on the EMNRD Commission website. Just some food for thought for all of us.

Chair Bajema: Okay, before we go to the next commission topic on the agenda, maybe we could take a five-minute break. Please grab a bagel, a muffin, whatever you need, and we will resume at 11:12. Thanks.

v. RGTC Program Management Plan (Commissioner Temchin)

Chair Bajema: Commissioners, please return to your seats. The commission is back in session. Commissioner Temchin, how about you start rolling on the presentation?

Commissioner Temchin: Okay. Just to give us some historical context, in the last meeting, we talked about forming the Rio Grande Commission Office. Like any other office, it's running a program called the Rio Grande trails. The program has functions and scope and schedule deliverables to create. So, the governor in the new appropriation bill of FY 25, section 128, the governor approved, under Section 128 energy, minerals and Natural Resources Department, the extension of the \$225,000 appropriation that was given in FY 25 to move into FY 26. So, in essence, what we have now in FY 26 starting July 1, we have a one year \$225,000 allocation for the new Rio Grande Commission Office. And so the question is, what do you do with that money, and how do we communicate success and value? So, I volunteered last year, and the point being that in the minutes of our last meeting, the chair acknowledged that quote, funding is often performance-based. If the legislature sees action from the Commission, they're more likely to continue funding it. So, we need to show value. We need to show that we're spending the money wisely and appropriately. So, I volunteered last time to put together a mini discussion of, should we create a Rio Grande trail program management plan, and I'm going to go through this real quick. I am not acting as a committee. I'm acting as a one-person working group until we figure out if the commission will approve the creation and maintenance of a program management plan, which would have a workflow process, integration process, and reporting out to the governor's Office and to the secretary.

So, if we go to page four of the package, page four discussion agenda, I'm going to go through the planning process, the partnership and organizational function, the benefits of a program management plan, and maybe a little look at what the work plan management would look like. This is a wide-open working draft. I'd appreciate any comments from the peanut gallery or whoever else wants to talk. So, on Slide five, it's a big circular thing, we know that the Rio Grande Trail Commission now has cultural and environmental vision statements. We have the master plan of 2018, which is clearly from today's discussion, going to be updated and revised to reflect what we know in 2025, and looking forward, we have goals and objectives to accomplish. All well stated, and all of these documents I'm talking about are in the back of this presentation, after the page that's called backup material. So, because we have a mission and a goal, the question is, how do we do that under what sets of rules or mandates? And in fact, we have a ton of state regulatory frameworks and mandates that we need to comply with, and we have funding obligations. So the question is, how are we going to pull all these requirements together and do all the technical work we talked about today and build the trail? How are we going to do that in some kind of organized fashion, in some kind of management structure? The answer is, let's get together and create a management plan that has integrated all these parts and pieces and that can generate compliance with the requirements, collaboration between the four working subcommittees, efficiency on how we work and how we spend money, and accountability to what we told the Secretary and what we told the state legislature.

So, I'm going to go to the next page. We could develop an organizational structure. The most important part of this organizational structure is the little box in the upper left that says working draft. This is my view of what I could collect from existing information. It's a facilitating slide, a place to start, Mr. Chair, and commissioners. I'm not saying this is right. I'm only saying we know where we're funded and under energy, mineral, and natural resources. We understand that we report to the Office of the Secretary and that our illustrious chair is now going to run a Rio Grande Trail Commission Office. And then, that office, we have goals and objectives, and we have regulatory mandates levied into this to the Office of the Secretary, and as we work our way down. The main thing you see there is that we have a consultant in a special representation from New Mexico EDD/ORD, in the form of Mr. Colonius, who is now here, and his subcontract capability in Katrina and Pland. And on the other side of the organization, we have a ton of state and federal regulatory partners, everybody contributing to the concept of our office, Mr. Chair. They report in. We need to report out. There needs to be some formality on how we do that, some expectation. But the working mechanism is our subcommittees. Here you see the four subcommittees that we've formalized today: tribal. alignment, legislative, and nonprofit.

Commissioner Gross, I'm proposing that in your nonprofit organization, we house the program management structure, which is basically in the definition. How is the Rio Grande trail organization going to function? So, chair, this is all up for grabs, but it wouldn't be a subcommittee, a working group under one of these four committees. And then, based on the master plan, the subcommittees would create, as necessary, working groups that would talk about coordination, communication, collect resources as necessary, outreach for alignment, talk to user groups, and design and manage certain improvements that were necessary along the way. Those are not my definitions; those come out of our master plan. So, this is just a place to start. What would we look like as an organization?

And then on the next slide, go to the next slide, please. We already start out with roles, a little bit of roles, and responsibility. What does our team look like? What are the primary functions? I'm not going to go through all this. Ultimately, this table would become, inside of each subcommittee, what we call a RACY matrix. Each subcommittee would define who's responsible for doing what, who's got their governance to review and approve decisions, who's consulted in the process, and who's informed. So now, not only do we have an organization, but people in our commission would have specific roles and responsibilities, so people could talk to each other. I've tried to capture the information that was made available through Dan's commission packet.

So, if we go to the next slide, we would have some kind of organizational structure. This is the \$64,000 question: why do we need a program management plan? I taught a program management master's degree-level course at Denver University for eight years. This is the essence of program management. I presented this to DOE, to DOD, and the concept is you start with a plan. What am I going to do? What's the scope of work? You start with a schedule. Things are going to happen on a certain timeline. There's a set of performance deliverables. What comes out of that work? When does it come out? And, in that vector diagram, there's a cost to everything we do. So, a piece of work has a scope, a schedule, performance, and a cost. However, when we go to do the work, nothing happens exactly the way we planned. Things change every year. Especially with us being legislatively funded, things are going to change. The climate is going to change, and politics are going to change. And so the robust on the right shows that we had a scope. But guess what? Creep on scope, uncertainty changed the scope of work. We now have a new scope. The new scope of work added time to our schedule, the scope and change in scope and time added new requirements, new work activities and all that generates more cost. And so we as a funded organization, in order for us to prove that we're spending the money wisely that the Appropriation Bill gave us, we're going to have to defend and manage change. What happened to change and whether, how did we spend the \$225,000 appropriately?

So all I'm proposing is that the four subcommittees would come together, define their scopes of work, define what they want to get done in FY 26 define what they think the output would be, and define their budgets, so we could pull those four subcommittees together, integrate those in a single document. Would say, this is our FY 26 plan. And I think as we go through that, there's going to be some interesting discussions about are we going to spend \$225,000? Do we need more? Do we need less? How are we going to spend that money, and how are we going to measure that the money was spent appropriately? What are the metrics?

This is a little bit of description of when we talk about when you want to define the scope of work. What does that definition look like? So in here, the one thing I added on the bottom of scope, schedule, deliverables, and cost is a change in risk management. And I would propose to you that that's potentially the most significant thing, as Commissioner Carter said, we've got two segments approved, that since the last meeting, things changed. We got more information. We got people to say yes to things we weren't sure about. And that change in input into those two segments allowed us to tentatively approve those segments today.

So all I'm proposing then is that if we came together and we had a work for workflow process, how the four subcommittees integrated, what the scope was, who was going to do, what we could put all that together and raise it to a higher level, Mr. Chair, which would be your office of the Rio Grande Trail Commission. And the best part of this, I believe, is that once we establish the plan, we could periodically measure the key performance indicators and show that we were making positive progress. We could report that to the governor's office. We could report that to the secretary. We could discuss it among ourselves in each quarterly meeting or semiannually. How are we doing, what were the lessons learned? How do we improve what we're doing and so on? And most significantly, as we said last time, we could convince the legislator that the Rio Grande trail Commission Office is a valuable office and needs to be continually funded until we have 1000s of people going up and down our state every year.

Here is our vision statement from the master plan 2018 and I would propose Mr. Chair that maybe we all look at it, and if we're going to have a program, we could then modify it or update it, enhance it to whatever you want, whatever this commission currently says, This is our new vision.

This is very important. This is the our regulatory goals, our alignment and design guidelines that we have to meet. This is a regulatory requirement. These five steps need to be fulfilled, and we need to show that we're doing our work. It fits inside the envelope of these regulatory requirements. This is the goals, as they were most recently stated in the

package that Pland prepared. I would suggest some of our goals have changed, commissioners, chair and everything we see here could be updated.

This is the reference to the general appropriation bill that was signed by the governor, where you can see that the \$225,000 is now reauthorized starting July 1. We're spending money as of July 1 against this. And the interesting part to note, and I would reference to you that the \$225,000 which was authorized last year has been moved into this year, and it represents three years of \$75,000. So, perhaps what they did was authorize a three year program in this current bill. If we don't spend all the money in 26 we need to justify, move the remaining money to 27 move the remaining money to 28. That's just a personal interpretation. It's too coincidental to me that three times 75,000 equals 225, and so maybe this is a three-year program, but you don't get the remaining money if you didn't earn the money in the current year. And so, my whole concept is we need to show the legislature that we're spending this money wisely, and so we've earned their trust to continue us on for another couple of years of funding. Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you very much

Chair Bajema: Just provide a little more context onto the budgetary piece. Yes, in the past, we've received annual appropriations of \$75,000 every year for reasons unknown. In talking with the legislature, we were appropriated \$225,000 one-time special appropriation. And that money does not extend to fiscal year 27, so it is only available for fiscal year 26, which we will hit on July 1 of 2025. Our goal is to spend all that money in the most beneficial ways possible. Commissioner Temchin, thank you so much for bringing this to the commission. I think that this plan is fantastic, and it's really valuable for us to have metrics to report on, and by statute, we're required to present updates to the legislature and interim committee, so specifically targeting the water and natural resources interim committee and the rural economic development interim committee for this interim period that's starting now until October. So, having some of those metrics will be really helpful. And we are also supposed to provide a report to the governor's office on the progress made by the Rio Grande Trail Commission. And those metrics will also be super helpful. Seeing that we have 25 minutes left on our time today.

Commissioner Temchin: I would just like to follow up. I'm basically asking if the commission would approve creating a working group or an organization, and I propose that the group would sit under Commissioner Gross's nonprofit organization or somewhere else. And if that were approved, then I would use the templates of the application formats to create standard working templates for each of the four committees to fill in a concise fashion. This is our scope, this is our schedule. These are the deliverables we expect. So, you wouldn't have to free form it. You just fill out each of the subcommittee members fill

out the form, just like the applications for segment form, submit them back to me, if I was approved as a facilitator.

Chair Bajema: Commissioner Temchin, would you like to make a motion?

Commissioner Temchin: I'd like to make a motion that the Commission approve the formation of a working group to facilitate the integration of the subcommittee information into a single Rio Grande Trail Commission office program management plan for FY 26.

Chair Bajema: Do I have a second?

Commissioner Carter: Since the proposal is housed under Commissioner Gross's nonprofit, I just want to make sure that that's not adding extra work and burden to that subcommittee.

Commissioner Gross: First of all, Commissioner Temchin, thanks for putting this together. You clearly have a lot of experience in this area, and this is great for the commission to figure out a way to structure our work and ultimately provide value to the taxpayers and make progress toward our mission. I would like to discuss if there was a way to find a different place in the org chart for this to go then under the nonprofit subcommittee. It's something that touches all of the subcommittees, and I think in deciding to take on chairing that subcommittee, I know it's going to be a lot of work. The oversight of this, I think, would expand that work quite a bit beyond the capacity I have to put into that committee.

Commissioner Temchin: Commissioner, thank you, Commissioner.

Chair Bajema: Please go through the Chair. Commissioner Gross, thank you for that comment. Commissioner Velasquez, I think that you have a suggestion for an amendment to this plan.

Commissioner Velasquez: I would recommend that this fall under the legislative committee. First of all, Commissioner Temchin, I love the mind of an engineer. Both of my kids are engineers, can't beat that approach. And so thank you so much for this work. I believe that it's important infrastructure for the work that the commission is going to do. I think this will directly inform our legislative committee, which will potentially seek re authorizations of funds, potentially seek more funds, maybe even go after capital funds. I really do think that this would fit best as a working group within the legislative committee, just because of what it's going to inform down the line and the fact that it will have a direct impact and support the Commission's ability to go and seek funding, maintain funding, retain funding, and potentially find capital funding for one-time measures. I think it would

fit there, and that would be my recommendation. But thank you for your tremendous amount of work and the mind of an engineer.

Chair Bajema: It is very well organized. Yes.

Commissioner Temchin: I want to reference special witness Colonius's statement. When we go back to Appendix B. Now that you've seen this, I want to read some words, Commissioner Gross, as to why I put it there. The nonprofit subcommittee was created to lead the development of a sustainable organization structure to help build capacity, coordinate resources, ensure the trails ongoing development, management, and stewardship. Now you can read that as we're talking about trail segments, or you can read it as support in the development of the RGT office. So, when I read it as a manager, I read this as supporting the creation of the new office. But I like Commissioner Velasquez's recommendation. I don't know that it matters where it sits, as long as we all contribute our thinking of what we want to do, so we can be tracked and transparent, and accountable to reporting outside of our commission. The fact that everybody on this commission is working hard to get this trail done in a value proposition, and they're doing the things they want they said they wanted to do.

Chair Bajema: Thank you. Commissioner Carter.

Commissioner Carter: As a clarification on the process of working groups, this has come up a new item here. It seems like it's housed under the subcommittees. Maybe it's just a discussion of the necessity of creating working groups. Is that something that needs to be approved in this commission, if we decide to do that as a committee, or is that just something that is a tool within a subcommittee that we can create, like a working group or a strategic meeting? I'm thinking for the alignment we might have, like, you know, a Socorro working group, just to identify alignments. Is that something that we would have to formally go through this commission to establish, or could we just create that as an informal body to discuss specific matters?

Chair Bajema: It's my understanding that it can be created as an informal body. But, I would, I would lean on my commissioners with more institutional knowledge, Commissioner Velasquez or Commissioner Glendenning, if you have any more clear understanding of the rules and regulations.

Commissioner Velasquez: My recommendation is it just happens as part of the work of the standing committees. If it falls within one or the other, it's just the work of the committee, with specific emphasis in one area that the committee is charged to perform evaluation and potentially bring back to the Commission. In this scenario, my recommendation would be that this work fall within the legislative committee. That means that Commissioner

Temkin should be part of our committee in order for this work to happen under that umbrella, and then we bring it back to the Commission. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair Bajema: Thank you, Commissioner Velasquez. I like that idea, too. I think that the legislative subcommittee is an appropriate place to put it. All of the subcommittees will provide inputs as are relevant to those subcommittees' missions, as we have identified.

Commissioner Temchin: I'd like to make a proposition. Then in the agenda, we get rid of the working group labels, so we're just subcommittees. And then we'll let the subcommittees form their own working groups as appropriate. And then second question is, if the work is going to be done under legislative group, then I'll get together with Commissioner Davidson and we'll figure out if people like the idea of standardizing and templating the input sheets from each subcommittee so we could pull that all together quickly in a standard work breakdown structure. So, it's easy to assemble the four committees. Mr. Commissioner Davidson, I'll get in touch with you after this.

Commissioner Davidson: Yeah, that sounds good.

Chair Bajema: Commissioner Temchin, I would encourage you to participate in all the subcommittee meetings too, and we can work to get you on the agenda to plug in where appropriate.

Commissioner Temchin: I would appreciate that invitation. Thank you.

Commissioner Carter: Is there still an outstanding motion?

Chair Bajema: There is still an outstanding motion. Since we have identified that working groups do not need to go through an official commission approval process, Commissioner Temchin?

Commissioner Temchin: I would like to remove my motion that there be a formal Working Group designated for the development of the PMP and recognize that each subcommittee will develop their own working group structure as deemed appropriate. Thank you, Commissioner Carter.

Chair Bajema: Next, I'd like to go to either Katrina or Dan to walk us through some very quick updates on the stakeholder convenings that happened in Dona Ana County on May 2 and May 3.

d. Miscellaneous

i. May 2nd-3rd, 2025 Doña Ana County stakeholder meetings

Dan Majewski: Jack, who works with us at Pland Collaborative, and I went down to Dona Ana County to do some stakeholder engagement. We had meetings in Hatch. So we had an internal stakeholder meeting and did some tabling in Hatch, and then also down in Mesilla. So, same thing: we had an internal stakeholder meeting and then did some tabling down there. We have a very strong relationship with Doña Ana County. They're very supportive of the trail, so this engagement was in partnership with them. The primary stakeholder that we're working with down there, as it relates to the current alignment of the trail, is IBWC, which is the International Boundary and Water Commission. They are the entity that's primarily responsible for the levy in that area. So, the proposed alignment of the trail would be along the levee down there. There is already a section of trail in Doña Ana County that has been designated as the Rio Grande Trail. It's called the La Llorona Trail. You can talk to Commissioner Carter, who lives in Las Cruces, more about that. So, there is already precedent for having a levee trail down there. Specifically, in Mesilla, there's very strong support for continuing the La Llorona trail and extending it along the levees. Generally, very positive engagement down there, and we're going to continue working closely with Doña Ana County and IBWC, of course, in partnership with the alignment subcommittee and all the other subcommittees to continue the progress down there. Please let me know if you have any other questions about that.

7. Announcement of Next Meeting

a. Discussion: Friday, September 19, Taos

i. Early November: Strategic planning session, Albuquerque

Chair Bajema: Our next meeting will be held on Friday, September 19, in Taos. And then we will have a strategic planning session in Albuquerque sometime in early November as well to follow up on a lot of the great work that Commissioner Temchin is doing. And to align our goals and priorities, especially to get ready for the upcoming legislative session. If anyone cannot make the Friday, September 19 time, please let me know as soon as possible. The reason that we've placed it there is because there is an outdoor recreation conference.

Dan Majewski: Chair, the conference is going to be happening in Gallup. So, it's September 8 through 10th. It's the Outdoor Economies Conference. The organizer of the conference reached out to us with interest in a presentation about the Rio Grande Trail. We're going to coordinate with the chair and make sure that the commission is well represented at that presentation. That's why we've pushed it a little later in September, so it doesn't conflict with this other gathering.

Chair Bajema: Yes, thank you, Dan. Since we have 10 minutes remaining, I wanted to thank all of the public members for coming out and sticking through almost three hours of this

commission meeting. I want to give you all an opportunity to speak and to give feedback on the commission meeting today. We would love to hear your feedback and input. If we have time at the end, we can touch on 7b, but I really wanted to make sure that y'all had an opportunity to ask questions or give comments and feedback. And if you're online, we would also welcome your feedback and comments. Please raise your hand, and we will call on you in the order that your hand is raised.

7. Public Comment

Nate Begay: Hello, Chair commission. I had a question. I'm Nate Begay. I'm the Regional Transportation Coordinator for US Fish and Wildlife Service. We're working on a bike trail down at Bosque del Apache through the Federal Lands Access Program. My question is, in terms of getting letters of support either through the commission or other channels, do you have a formal process to do that, or is it more just reaching out directly to the chair or other folks on the commission?

Chair Bajema: I'll allow other folks to respond. But, from my understanding, the departments, the state government departments, EMNRD, EDD, and ORD are fully equipped and able to provide letters of support. From the commission standpoint, I think that's something that we could also do, but I think you would have a quicker avenue and mechanism through reaching out to me directly for EMNRD, or potentially Mr. Colonius at the outdoor recreation division.

Any other public comments? Seeing none in the audience, thank you for taking the time out of your Friday morning to be here today. We appreciate you. And anyone online, any comments, questions, or concerns, we would love to hear them.

Commissioner Velasquez: I would like to take a point of privilege and recognize our deputy Cabinet Secretary for the Energy Minerals, and Natural Resources Department. Mr. Ben Shelton, in the back, thank you, Ben, for your continued support of the Rio Grande Trail Commission.

7b. Which communities should we meet in?

Chair Bajema: Also, thank you for serving as an outstanding tribal liaison for our department. You've been a big help and support, thank you. All right, any comments from online? Seeing none, we have an item on the agenda, 7b, which community should we meet in? I just want a quick discussion with the Commission. We've heard a lot from Commissioner Temchin about the potential need to have a meeting with stakeholders in the Placitas region. Are there any other regions that the commission would like to prioritize

for doing some sort of public convening similar to the Doña Ana stakeholder meeting? Or if there's anything from our collaborators at Pland?

Katrina Arndt: We would like to have one in Doña Ana County, at some point, because there is a lot of trail that we can potentially designate, and then Albuquerque as well. These meetings really help to energize the community and help us focus in on these areas. So, if there are any other areas that you all like us to focus on, it would be great to hear.

Commissioner Carter: I think that's a good idea with Albuquerque, since there is some stuff there and there are a lot of people, but also Socorro, I think there could be some really great opportunities there. There's a lot of existing stuff and a blossoming trail community there, so I think that could be a good one. I am biased to Las Cruces, but we have had some love in the past, and we have a lot of things going. So, just think of some of our other communities that maybe haven't had the opportunity to host the commission or meeting. So specifically, from Santa Fe to Taos, I think there are a lot of communities within that area that could be impacted one way or another. So considering that, and even just in Santa Fe proper, based on the conversation yesterday at the field visit, I think Santa Fe would be a good place to consider in the future for a working group meeting on potential alignments.

Commissioner Gross: Mr. Chair, I really enjoyed, with our last meeting in T or C, the field trip. I would love to see that incorporated into all of our meetings, if possible.

Chair Bajema: Excellent. Well, I believe that takes us to the end of our very productive agenda today. Thank you for all the commissioners for coming out. I know that a lot of you live, especially Commissioner Carter, very far away. So thank you so much for taking the time to drive up here and be here in person. And thank you all, for the public, for coming out and listening to us. We would love to continue to engage with you wherever possible. And thank you to Carl and Pland Collaborative for all the great work that you guys have been doing. This couldn't happen without y'all. So, thank you so much.

9. Adjournment

Chair Bajema: And with that, I would like to close the 22nd Rio Grande Trail Commission meeting. Thank you all for your time.

Commissioner Carter: **Chair. Motion to adjourn.**

Chair Bajema: Do I have a second?

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Temchin – YES

Commissioner Harris – YES

Commissioner Chacon – YES

Commissioner Gross – YES

Chair Bajema – YES

Commissioner Velasquez – YES

Commissioner Armijo – YES

Commissioner Davidson – YES

Commissioner Glendenning – YES

Commissioner Carter – YES

With unanimous consent, this motion is approved.

Chair Bajema: The 22nd Rio Grande Trail Commission meeting is hereby adjourned. Thank you, all.