



Río Grande Trail

FY2026 REPORT

JUNE 2026



Proposed Río Grande Trail river crossing at the John Dunn Bridge near Taos, NM

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OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Fiscal Year (FY)26 (July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026) was a productive year for the Río Grande Trail (RGT). Over 10 miles of existing trail were designated. Progress towards the designation of 100+ miles continued through numerous meetings with land managers, tribes and pueblos, local governments, state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations. In addition to the three Río Grande Trail Commission (RGTC) meetings that were held in FY26, there were other significant ongoing efforts to engage the public.



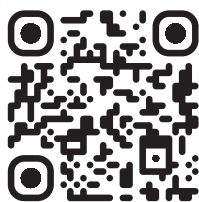
Community Gravel Bike Ride event prior to the April 10, 2026 RGT Commission Meeting, Las Cruces, NM

The primary goal of our work on the RGT is to designate RGT segments. The 2018 RGT Master Plan identified alignments and described segments in relation to their readiness for designation. **These are important distinctions when evaluating each segment to understand the relative ease or difficulty of designation. Throughout the report, we describe and categorize trail segments as follows:**

- > **Designated:** Existing trails or infrastructure that have been designated as the RGT.
- > **Undesignated:** Existing trails or infrastructure that could be utilized as the trail that have not been designated as the RGT.
- > **Proposed:** This term refers to trail segments that do not exist. Some of these trail segments have begun the planning process, while others are still conceptual.

The following sections outline the key tasks and actions undertaken by the Pland Team to advance the vision of the RGT.

Link to the Río Grande Trail Map:



[Click here to access the Río Grande Trail Interactive Map](#)

DESIGNATED TRAIL

Designated trail is existing infrastructure that is currently a part of the RGT. The following total accounts for all Designated trail, including segments Designated in prior years:

Designated = 130.53 miles

UNDESIGNATED TRAIL

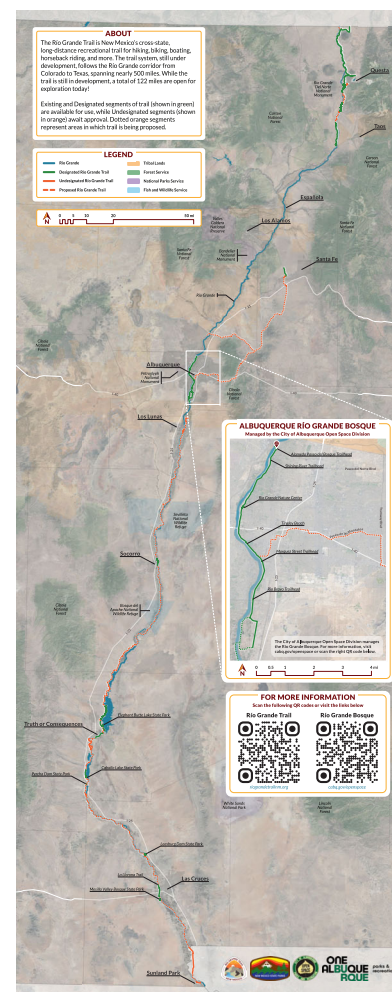
Undesignated trail segments are a priority for designation. Undesignated trails are existing trails or infrastructure that are already being used for recreation or as trails. Each segment requires different levels of stakeholder engagement. Tables in the County Summaries section on page 18 provide more information about each trail segment, location, and engagement details.

Undesignated = 31.13 miles

PROPOSED TRAIL

The remaining trail mileage is at the planning level or includes gaps where no alignment is identified. Those trail segments may require new trail construction and additional resources. Ground-truthing may lead to recommendations to realign certain segments. In southern New Mexico, a significant percentage of trail mileage is proposed on existing flood control infrastructure: levees or levee roads. Some of these alignments could be designated with support from the local flood control authority, and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), with whom we initiated engagement over the past year. In northern New Mexico, the Master Plan left significant gaps where no trail alignment was proposed, notably between Santa Fe and Taos County. For this area specifically, our team held multiple meetings with stakeholders to discuss the Santa Fe-Taos connections, which are further elaborated under the Santa Fe to Taos Connection section on [page 14](#). More information about notable sections of proposed trail segments that have begun the planning process can be found in the County Summaries on [page 18](#) of this report.

Proposed = 365.88 miles

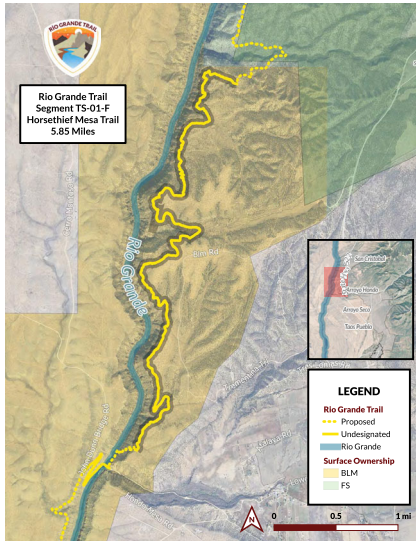


Map Area Panel Sign depicting the full extents of the RGT, designed for the City of Albuquerque (CABQ)

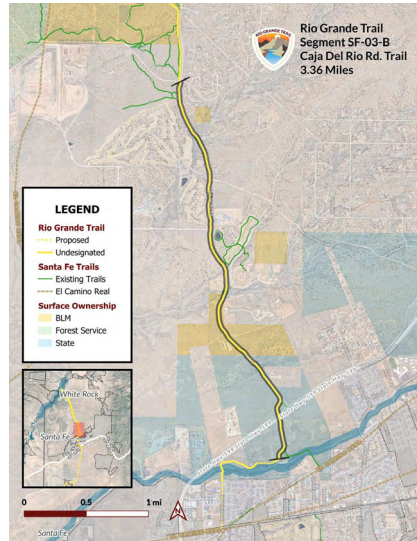
OVERVIEW

TRAIL SEGMENTS DESIGNATED IN FY26

By the Río Grande Trail Commission (RGTC)

HORSETHIEF MESA TRAIL - 5.85 MILES

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Taos Field Office provided a letter of support for this segment. The RGTC approved it at the September 19, 2025 meeting.

CAMINO REAL: SANTA FE RIVER TO CAMINO DE REY RD – 3.36 MILES

This portion of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail (NHT) provides a paved multi-use trail connection between the Caja del Rio and the Santa Fe River Trail. The City of Santa Fe provided a letter of support for this alignment, and Santa Fe County passed a resolution backing the trail's designation. The RGTC approved this alignment for designation at their September 19, 2025 meeting.

SUNLAND PARK RIVER TRAIL – 1.33 MILES

After receiving enthusiastic support and a letter of support from the City of Sunland Park, the RGTC approved this section of the existing paved trail at its April 10, 2026 meeting. Sunland Park intends to continue expanding this trail northward to connect it with the Río Grande Riverpark Trail in El Paso.

The total number of miles designated during FY26 was 10.54



View of the Rio Grande Gorge from the Horsethief Mesa Trail Near Taos, NM

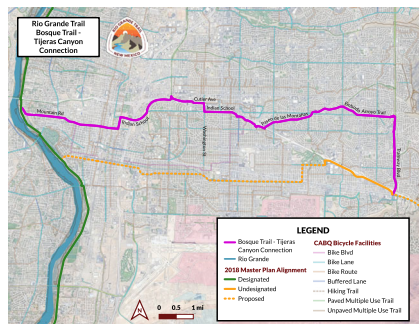


View of Mount Cristo Rey from the Sunland Park River Trail, Sunland Park, NM

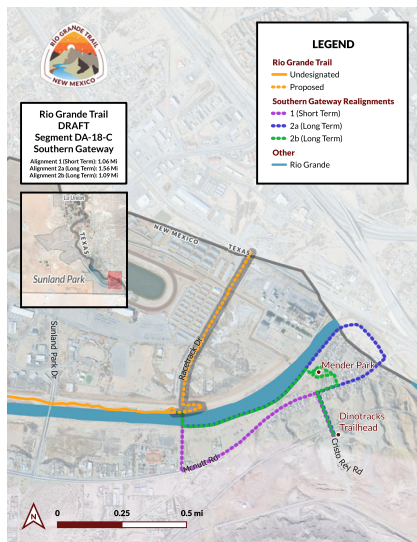
OVERVIEW

TRAIL SEGMENTS REALIGNED IN FY26

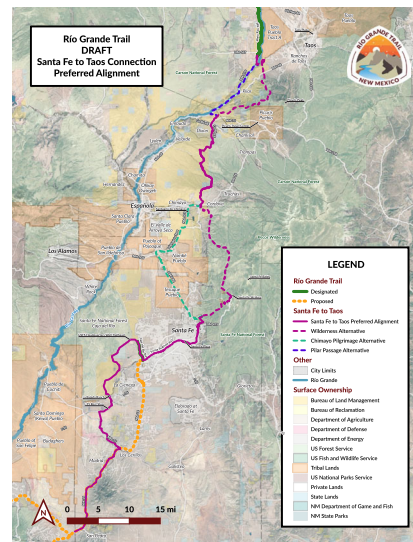
By the Río Grande Trail Commission (RGTC)

BOSQUE TRAIL-TIJERAS CANYON CONNECTION: 15.05 MILES

This segment of trail through the City of Albuquerque connects the Bosque Trail to Tijeras Canyon. The realignment application for this section of trail was brought before the Río Grande Trail Commission at the April 10th, 2026 meeting, where it was approved unanimously. Previously, the alignment utilized on-street facilities such as Zuni Rd, Lead Ave, and Coal Ave, as well as the I-40 multi-use trail to navigate the city east/west, from the Bosque to the Sandia Mountains. The realignment proposed a more pleasant, accessible, and safer user experience by shifting the trail north and aligning it with existing trails, such as those along Paseo de las Montañas, Embudo Arroyo, and Tramway. While multi-use trails were not available, the realignment utilized prominent, established bike routes such as Indian School Rd, Edith Blvd, and Mountain Rd.

SOUTHERN GATEWAY (DINOTRACKS): 1.06-1.56 MILES

This section of RGT was realigned at the April 10th, 2026 commission meeting. Before this, the southern terminus of the Río Grande Trail was at the busy intersection of two roads in an industrialized part of Sunland Park. The realignment proposed three routes, each of which connect the Sunland Park River Trail to DinoTracks, a scenic site at the base of Mount Cristo Rey. The “short-term” option proposes a direct path to DinoTracks along the sidewalk of NM-237 while the “long-term” options propose routes which follow the Río Grande, then cut back towards DinoTracks, limiting the amount of time spent walking along busy roads. With support from a recent Trails+ Grant, Insights El Paso, the owner of DinoTracks, completed a new restroom, outdoor classroom, signage, and other site improvements, with plans to add a campground in the future.

SANTA FE TO TAOS CONNECTION: 184.87 MILES

A primary focus in FY26 was the alignment and realignment effort for the section of trail between the south Santa Fe County line and the southern end of the West Rim Trail in Taos County. The map above displays the alignments officially proposed and adopted for consideration by the Río Grande Trail Commission at its April 10th, 2026 meeting.

See [page 14](#) for more information about the Santa Fe to Taos Connection.



DinoTracks site visit prior to the April 10, 2026 RGTC meeting



Site visit to La Bajada near the Caja del Rio Plateau, NM

RIO GRANDE TRAIL COMMISSION



The RGTC seated for their January 15, 2026 Meeting at the Vincent E. Griego Chambers, Albuquerque

MEETING PRODUCTION

In FY25, the Río Grande Trail Commission (RGTC) was re-established and met twice. This fiscal year, the RGTC continued their work with three meetings.

Our team continued to support the RGTC meetings with administrative tasks, the development of materials, and the preparation of trail segments for designation. This included audio/visual checks with the meeting venue, procurement of meeting refreshments, coordination with guest speakers, and any other meeting logistics as required. Meeting packets and agendas, as well as large maps and other graphics, were also developed for each meeting in coordination with the commission. We promoted the meetings through our newsletter, project website, and strategic, targeted outreach in the communities where the meetings took place. Our team also worked with stakeholders to garner support, led the RGTC subcommittee meetings, and provided information sharing and training sessions on the RGT project. In coordination with the RGTC meeting, we also organized community gatherings and site tours the day before the meetings.

MEETING OVERVIEWS

SEPTEMBER 18-19, 2025: TAOS

September 18: Horsethief Mesa Site Visit and Community Happy Hour

- > On the Thursday before the commission meeting, 15 community members and commissioners joined a site tour of Horsethief Mesa and the John Dunn Bridge. As a result of conversations on this site tour, Horsethief Mesa was approved for designation at the meeting the following morning. Visiting the John Dunn Bridge site allowed community members to view and discuss the planned connection between Horsethief Mesa and the John Dunn Bridge.
- > After the site tour, attendees and community members were invited to continue conversations at Midtown Market, a restaurant in Arroyo Seco.

September 19: Río Grande Trail Commission Meeting

- > Meeting highlights included:
 - Review of Tribal subcommittee meetings with multiple tribes
 - Designation of Horsethief Mesa Trail
 - Designation of Camino Real: Santa Fe River to Camino de Rey Road
 - Approval of designation & realignment application forms and a standard letter of support template
 - Proposal to amend the State Trails Act

JANUARY 15-16, 2026: ALBUQUERQUE

January 15: Rail Trail Site Visit and Community Happy Hour

- > On the Thursday before the commission meeting, 13 attendees joined a site tour of an under-construction segment of the Albuquerque Rail Trail adjacent to the Alvarado Transportation Center. This site tour highlighted the newest and most advanced urban trail project in New Mexico. It also provided opportunities to discuss multimodal connections to the RGT corridor. Additionally, this trail segment was being considered as part of a connection between the Bosque Trail and the RGT through route via NM 14.
- > After the site tour, attendees walked to Sidetrack Brewing to continue the conversation and deepen community connections.

January 16: Río Grande Trail Commission Meeting

- > Meeting highlights included:
 - RGT budget updates
 - Review of proposed options for the Santa Fe Taos Connection
 - Updates on the non-profit contractor selection
 - Discussion of trail segments for designation in Bernalillo County
 - Approval of a redesigned RGT logo

APRIL 9-10, 2026: DOÑA ANA COUNTY/LAS CRUCES

April 9: Southern Gateway Site Visits and Community Gravel Bike Ride

- > On Thursday, April 9, 18 community members and commissioners joined a site tour of DinoTracks, a fossil-filled prehistoric landscape owned by an El Paso-based non-profit partner. Following this site tour, the commission approved this location as the new southern trailhead for the trail at the meeting the following morning. After this site tour, attendees visited the Sunland Park River Trail. The following morning, the commission approved the trail for designation.
- > In the evening, the commission collaborated with local outdoor recreation advocates on a community bike ride along designated sections of the Río Grande Trail in Las Cruces. Attended by an estimated 100 cyclists, this ride was an opportunity to connect with the community and highlight the RGT. The ride was followed by conversations at Spotted Dog Brewery, the start and end point of the ride.

April 10: Río Grande Trail Commission Meeting

- > Meeting highlights included:
 - Combining the tribal and legislative subcommittees
 - Approval of proposed Santa Fe Taos connection route for further refinement
 - Designation of Sunland Park Trail
 - Approval of RGT southern trailhead realignment to the DinoTracks site
 - Presentation from non-profit subcontractor

SUBCOMMITTEES

TRIBAL

Summary of FY26 subcommittee work:

This fiscal year, the Tribal Subcommittee continued the important work of building and rebuilding relationships with tribes and pueblos. The focus continued to be on tribal entities in proximity to the river and the proposed trail segments, but the outreach included all tribes and pueblos. We were able to have key meetings with the Nambé Pueblo and Picuris Pueblo related to the Santa Fe Taos Connection.

The fiscal year ended with the combining of the Tribal and Legislative Subcommittees. The hope is that by combining these subcommittees, limited capacity can be used more efficiently.

Meetings with specific tribes and pueblos:

- > San Felipe Pueblo (7/14/2025)
- > Nambé Pueblo (3/19/2026)
- > Picuris Pueblo (4/1/2026)

Subcommittee Meetings:

- > 2025: July 14; July 28; August 25; September 22
- > 2026: March 3; March 17; March 31

Special meetings with key stakeholders:

- > October 1, 2025: Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC)
- > March 18, 2026: Tribal Focus Group, New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

ALIGNMENT

Summary of FY26 subcommittee work:

The Alignment Subcommittee, by far the most active of the subcommittees, continued to grow and evolve over FY26. More community members were invited to the subcommittee. Relationships were strengthened, and trust among members grew, allowing for more impactful discussion and greater support for trail designation and future strategy. This subcommittee was a critical part of the Santa Fe Taos discussion. The work this year included:

- > Santa Fe to Taos Initiative
- > Albuquerque Realignment (Bosque to Tijeras Canyon Connection)
- > Albuquerque to Tijeras Designation
- > NM-14 Tijeras to San Antonio Designation
- > Sunland Park River Trail Designation
- > Río Grande Riverpark Trail Designation
- > DinoTracks Realignment

Looking ahead, this subcommittee could continue to support the efforts of trail designation. Key next steps for the alignment subcommittee include:

- > Resolving the Bernalillo County/Valencia County Connection, the final significant statewide gap in the proposed trail alignment;
- > Identifying the next round of segments to designate, with a focus on Sierra County/State Parks + natural candidates from the Santa Fe Taos Connection, including the Santa Fe River Trail, deeper conversations with Caja del Rio stakeholders, and coordination with Santa Fe County on La Bajada Ranch;
- > Continued designation coordination with IBWC and MRGCD, with an opportunity to involve MRGCD at the upcoming Socorro meeting;
- > Conducting a deeper audit of the list of trail segments found at the end of the report and agreeing on priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. This ideally would coordinate with meeting locations for the upcoming fiscal year as well.

Subcommittee Meetings:

- > August 18; September 15; October 6; October 27; November 10; December 8; December 15; January 5; February 2; February 18; March 2; March 16; March 30; April 27; June 8; June 22

Special meetings with key stakeholders:

- > February 23: DinoTracks Meeting, Insights El Paso
- > March 11: Paso del Norte Trail Meeting, Paso del Norte Foundation
- > March 20: Dinotracks Meeting, Insights El Paso
- > March 25: Santa Fe to Taos Stakeholder Meeting, various stakeholders
- > April 2: Santa Fe to Taos, Pilar Meeting, various stakeholders

LEGISLATIVE

Summary of FY26 subcommittee work:

- > Coordination with IBWC
- > Coordination with MRGCD

Subcommittee Meetings:

- > March 3; March 17; March 31; April 14; April 28; May 12; May 26; June 9; June 23

Special meetings with key stakeholders:

- > March 2: IBWC Pre-Meeting, Doña Ana County
- > March 5: IBWC Meeting, USIBWC

NON-PROFIT

Summary of FY26 subcommittee work:

- > Creation of the Non-Profit RFP
- > Selection of Non-Profit Contractor, Fundraising for the Future
- > Continued coordination with and support of the Non-Profit Contractor

Subcommittee Meetings:

- > December 9; December 23; January 6; January 20; February 3; February 17; February 24; March 3; March 10; March 17; March 24; March 31; April 7; April 14; April 21; April 28; May 5; May 12; May 19; May 26; June 2; June 9; June 16; June 23; June 30

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In FY26, stakeholder engagement became more strategic and targeted. With the commission meetings restarting, our work aligned more closely with the commission. Additional tabling was done at the state legislative session.

At each commission meeting, Pland provided printed maps associated with the event location, SWAG such as stickers, mugs, seed packages, candy, and sign-in sheets to connect community members to the RGT newsletter and website. Pland continued to manage promotion of the RGT through merchandise and a project-specific website.

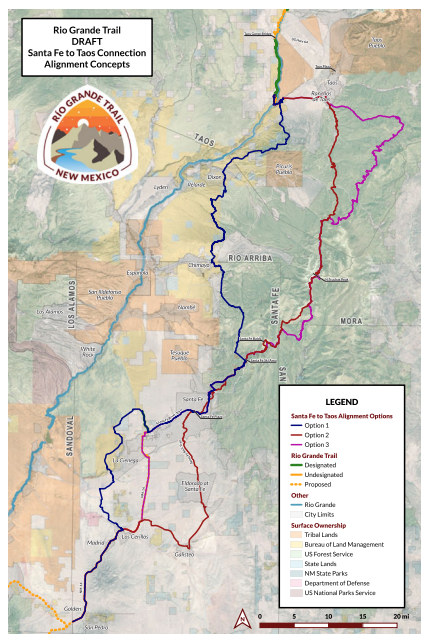


Engagement materials at the 23rd RGTC Meeting, Taos

SANTA FE TO TAOS CONNECTION

Our primary engagement effort this fiscal year focused on the Santa Fe Taos Connection. In the 2018 Master Plan, no alignment was identified between these two important communities. We conducted a thorough evaluation, with the scope encompassing both counties. In collaboration with the Alignment Subcommittee and other key stakeholders, three proposed alignments were identified. We developed narrative guides for each of these three options. A survey was conducted to gather public input on these three alignments. Additionally, a key stakeholder group was developed to discuss the three different options. After 5 months of collecting input, a strong consensus on a single alignment emerged. That alignment was brought to the commission, and at their April 10, 2026 meeting, the commission voted to adopt this proposed alignment for further consideration.

Map of the initial (3) proposed Santa Fe to Taos Connection alignment options



LOGO

To better align with National Trail System standards and position the Río Grande Trail for future designation as a National Scenic Trail, a new RGT logo was developed in FY26 and approved at the January 16, 2026 RGTC meeting. The updated design retains the recognizable elements of the existing logo while flipping the Reuleaux triangle-shaped frame so that its point faces upward, consistent with national trail signage conventions. Additional refinements included adding “New Mexico” at the base of the frame, a black border to improve legibility, and changing the internal accent color from yellow to dark red.



Old (left) and new (right) Río Grande Trail Logos

ONLINE PRESENCE

NEWSLETTER

To keep up with the increased pace of Río Grande Trail efforts, the once quarterly newsletter has become a monthly publication since November 2025. As of April 2026, the newsletter has 526 subscribers and an above-average open rate of 55% for the fiscal year. Newsletters contain trail segment highlights, information about RGTC meetings, events, and commissioners, updates on RGT progress, surveys, links to partner organizations, and more.

WEBSITE

Since its launch in 2024, the Río Grande Trail Website has undergone many changes. The site is regularly updated to reflect current information, and new content is continually added in response to ongoing planning efforts and stakeholder input. Notable additions to the website from FY26 include updates to the Río Grande Trail Interactive Map, the inclusion of the Río Grande Trail's 2026 Signage Guidelines Packet as a downloadable PDF. The website also hosts a “Santa Fe to Taos” information page, with the interactive Santa Fe to Taos Map, and more information about the Santa Fe to Taos alignment effort. Visit the website at: riograndetrailnm.org

INTERACTIVE MAPS

Our team continues to maintain an interactive map that highlights where RGT alignments are located and whether they are designated, undesignated, or proposed. Pland continues to manage and update the trail alignments and other layers featured on the map as discussions progress and discoveries are made. This map remains a useful tool for tracking progress and facilitating communication with stakeholders. It is accessible via the website and through the RGT newsletter. A new interactive map was created in 2025 to aid stakeholder engagement efforts for the Santa Fe to Taos alignment initiative. This map displayed current alignment possibilities as our team was working on them and was updated in accordance with new information and ideas from RGTC Alignment subcommittee meetings and Santa Fe to Taos stakeholder engagement events. Visit the interactive map at: <https://arog.is/tjSOv42>

INTERNAL MEETINGS



Santa Fe to Taos Meeting; site visit to the mountains above the Río Grande Gorge Visitor Center, Pilar NM

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INTERNAL MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION

Over FY26, our team had over 30 meetings with land managers across federal, state, county, tribal, and local governments. Pland also met with community organizations and nonprofits. Constant engagement and communication are essential for the RGT's development. The project relies heavily on relationship building- hiking, biking, and horseback riding towards a shared future, together.

CHECK-INS

In FY26, our team met with the Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) over 20 times. After the commission was re-established, check-ins also included the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD). These meetings were utilized to provide progress reports, develop commission meeting agendas, discuss priorities, and solicit input on trail-related deliverables.

COUNTY SUMMARIES

COUNTY SUMMARIES

TAOS COUNTY

62.8 miles are Designated in Taos County, comprised of Río Grande del Norte Trails, the La Junta Trail, Cebolla Mesa, Horsethief Mesa, and the West Rim Trails.

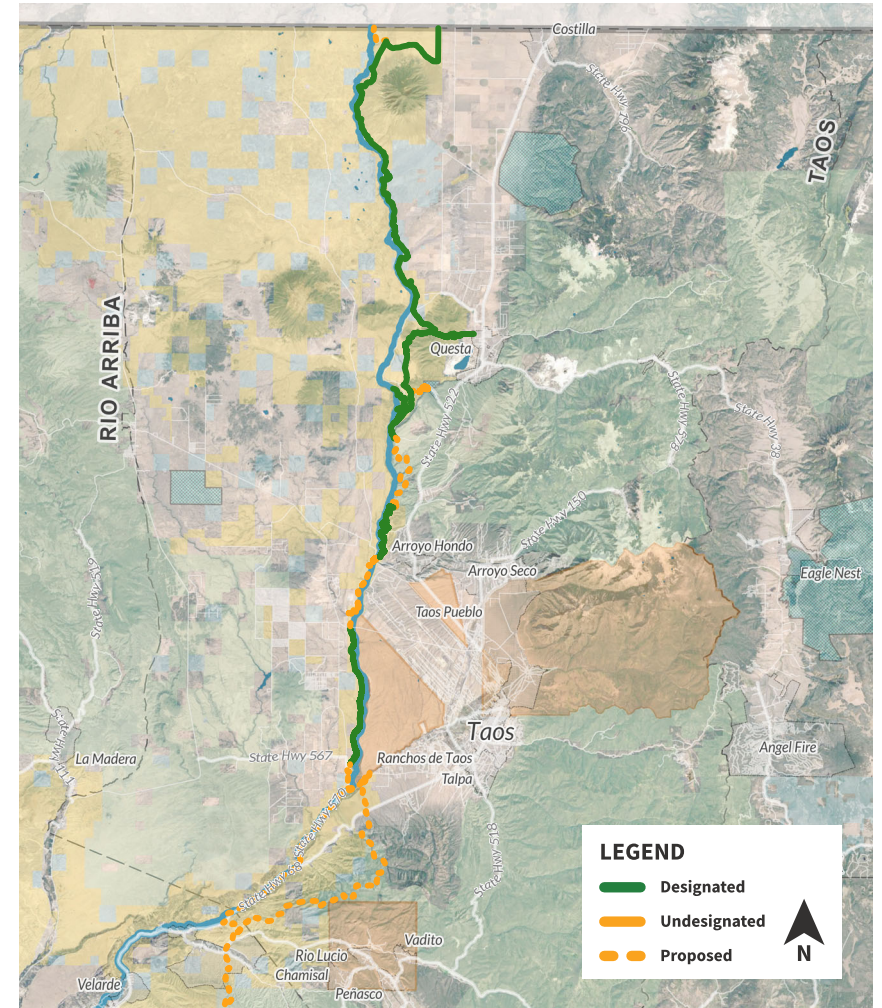
0.8 miles are Undesignated in Taos County, comprised of the John Dunn Bridge.

UNDESIGNATED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
John Dunn Bridge (TS-02-A)	0.83	A bridge over the Rio Grande on BLM land, just west of Arroyo Hondo. This would connect the existing Horsethief Mesa Trail in the northeast to the proposed Bridge to Bridge trail in the southwest.

56.8 miles are Proposed in Taos County, with different segments in varying levels of development.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Costilla Creek (TS-01)	1.77	Parallel alternative trail connection to the Colorado border. Connects the trail back to the Rio Grande River.
Pescado Trail (TS-01-B)	2.41	Proposed spur trail.
Garrapata Canyon – Cebolla/ Horsethief Connection (TS-01-E)	7.5	In partnership with the USFS, a route has been identified to connect Cebolla Mesa to Horsethief Mesa. Initial linework has been identified. Opportunities include numerous existing roads and paths. Challenges include significant grade changes throughout the route and multiple canyons.
John Dunn Escape/Horsethief Connector (TS-01-G)	0.45	Connector route between John Dunn Bridge and Horsethief Mesa. Steep terrain. No trail currently exists but a route has been scouted.
Bridge-to-Bridge (TS-02-B)	6.02	Trail connecting John Dunn Bridge to Rio Grande Gorge Bridge.
Santa Fe Taos Connection: West Rim Trail to John Dunn Bridge	2.26	Connector route between the West Rim Trail and John Dunn Bridge.
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Northern Wilderness Alternative	22.56	Mix of proposed and existing trail. Endorsed by the RGTC at the 4/10/26 meeting. Utilizes USFS and BLM land, including a section of the recent Taos Klaur BLM acquisition. Connects the southern end of the Orilla Verde Recreation area and the Río Grande del Norte National Monument to Dixon.
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Pilar Passage	13.85	Alternative route for the Santa Fe Taos Connection. Stays closer to the river and avoids remote wilderness areas.

FIGURE 1. TAOS COUNTY



RIO ARRIBA COUNTY

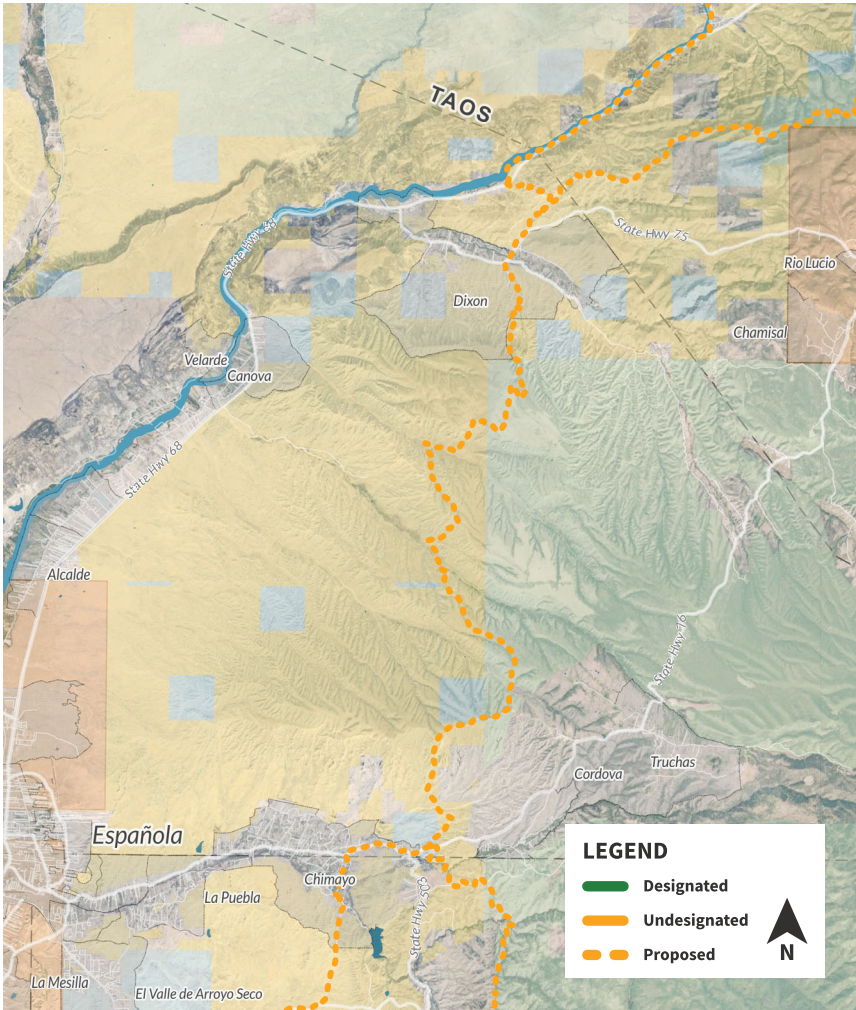
22.0 miles are Proposed in Rio Arriba County, comprised of the Santa Fe to Taos Connection: Chimayo to Dixon section.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Chimayo to Dixon	22.04	Connection between Chimayo and Dixon. Primarily BLM and USFS. Requires additional ground truthing. Primarily utilizes existing two-track and arroyos.



Site visit to the Horsethief Mesa Trail near Taos, NM

FIGURE 2. RIO ARRIBA COUNTY



COUNTY SUMMARIES

SANTA FE COUNTY

3.4 miles are **Designated** in Santa Fe County, comprised of the Caja del Rio Connection.

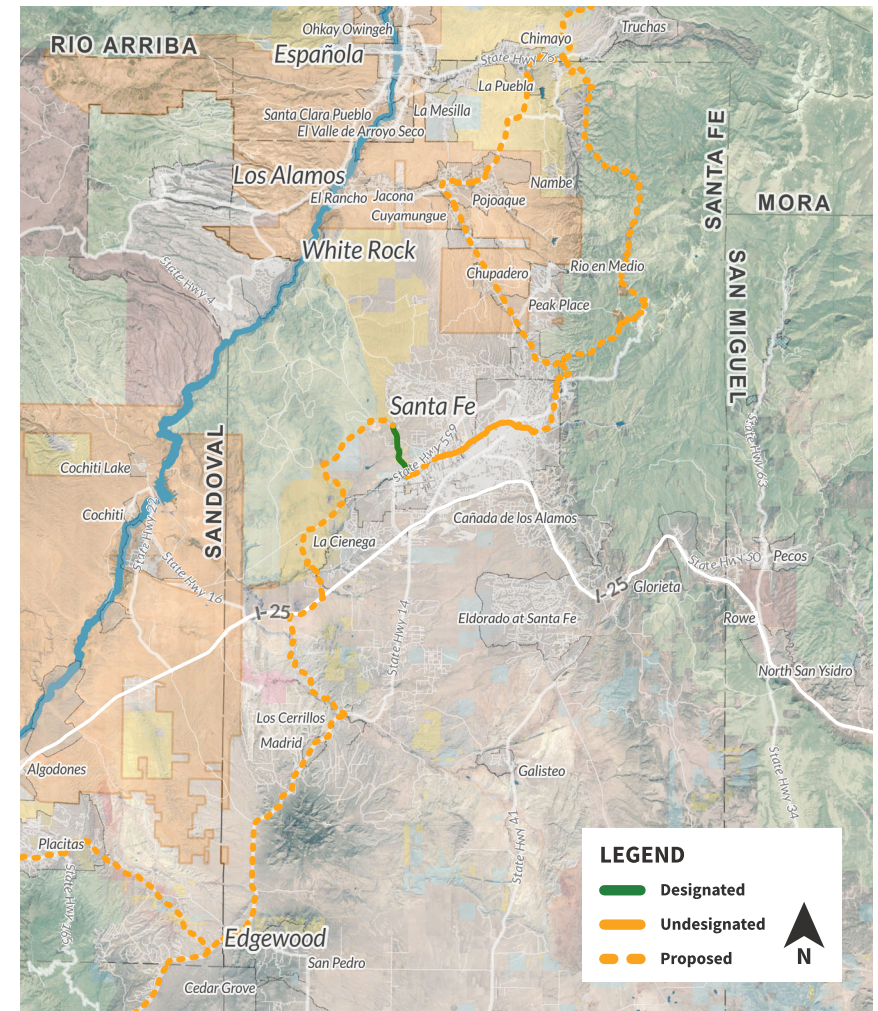
9.2 miles are **Undesignated** in Santa Fe County, comprised of the Santa Fe River Trail.

UNDESIGNATED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Santa Fe River Trail	9.15	The alignment utilizes the entire Santa Fe River Trail through Santa Fe. This is an existing urban multi-use trail that is mostly complete. There is a short gap on the southwest end of the corridor.

111.5 miles are **Proposed** in Santa Fe County, with different segments in varying levels of development.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Southern Wilderness Alternative	30.73	Connection between Chimayo and City of Santa Fe. Opposed by Nambé Pueblo. Primarily utilizes wilderness, which prohibits bicycles. Primarily utilizes existing trails.
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Chimayo Pilgrimage Alternative	27.94	Alternative route for the Santa Fe Taos Connection. Suggested by Nambé Pueblo. Utilizes NMDOT/highway right of way. Passes through Tesuque and Nambé Pueblos. Utilized by hundreds of pilgrims annually on Good Friday, before Easter.
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Dale Ball Trails	8.27	From the National Forest, the alignment enters Santa Fe via the Dale Ball Trail network. After using a few short sections of local streets, the alignment connects to the Santa Fe River Trail.
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Caja del Rio	14.5	Connection through the Caja del Rio on USFS and BLM land.
Santa Fe Taos Connection: Caja del Rio to I-25	1.8	From the Caja, the connection travels through the Santa Fe County-owned La Bajada Ranch to I-25. There is also a short possible connection through Tres Rios Ranch, which, as of 5/14/2026, is listed for sale. A conservation trust is attempting to purchase it.
Santa Fe to Taos Connection: I-25 Frontage Rd	2.76	At I-25, the alignment crosses the highway via Canada de Santa Fe, an existing lightly used bridge that connects two ranches. From there, the trail proceeds southwest along the interstate until it reaches NM 57/ Waldo Canyon Rd.
SF-T Connection: Waldo Canyon Rd.	8.17	The alignment follows NM 57/Waldo Canyon Rd, which is mostly unpaved, southeast through Los Cerrillos until it reaches NM 14.
SF-T Connection: Pilar Passage	13.85	Alternative route for the Santa Fe Taos Connection. Stays closer to the river and avoids remote wilderness areas.

FIGURE 3. SANTA FE COUNTY



COUNTY SUMMARIES

SANDOVAL COUNTY

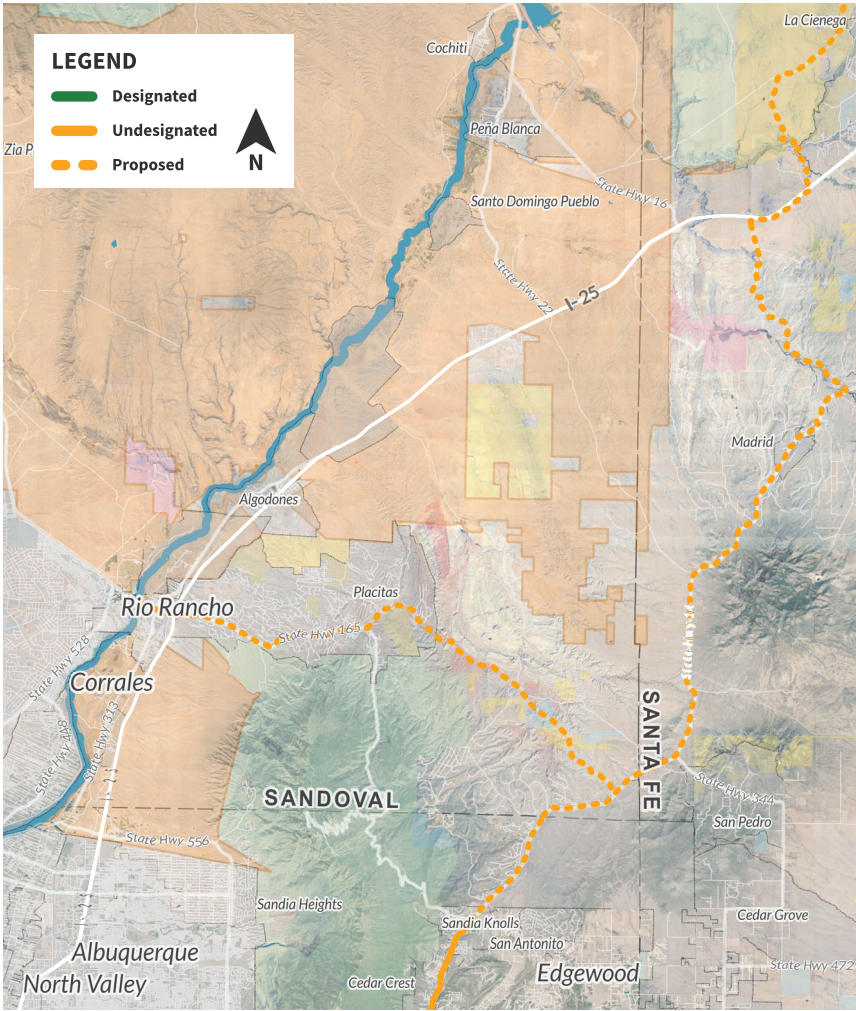
24.5 miles are Proposed in Sandoval County, comprised of the Santa Fe to Taos Connection: Santa Fe County Line to Bernalillo County Line, and the Placitas Gas Line Easement and Placitas Cutoff which connect the proposed trail along NM-14, through Placitas, to Bernalillo.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
NM 14: Santa Fe County Line to Bernalillo County Line (SF-03-F)	3.85	Proposed trail along state highway corridor right of way.
Placitas Gas Line Easement (SV-08-A)	12.18	Connection between NM 14 and Placitas. Conversations between local trail advocates, the City of Albuquerque Open Space, the NM State Land Office, and the BLM have recently begun to identify a way to connect adjacent parcels with a trail. It's a parallel alternative to this gas line easement, which is not feasible.
Placitas Cutoff, NM 165/550 (SV-08-B)	8.48	Connection between Placitas and the river.



View of the Sandia Mountains near Albuquerque, NM

FIGURE 4. SANDOVAL COUNTY



COUNTY SUMMARIES

BERNALILLO COUNTY

25.1 miles are Designated in Bernalillo County, comprised of the Bosque Trail system. This trail network includes the Chris Chavez Trail, the West Riverside Trail, the Paseo del Bosque Trail, the Rio Grande Nature Center, and Valle de Oro Trail.

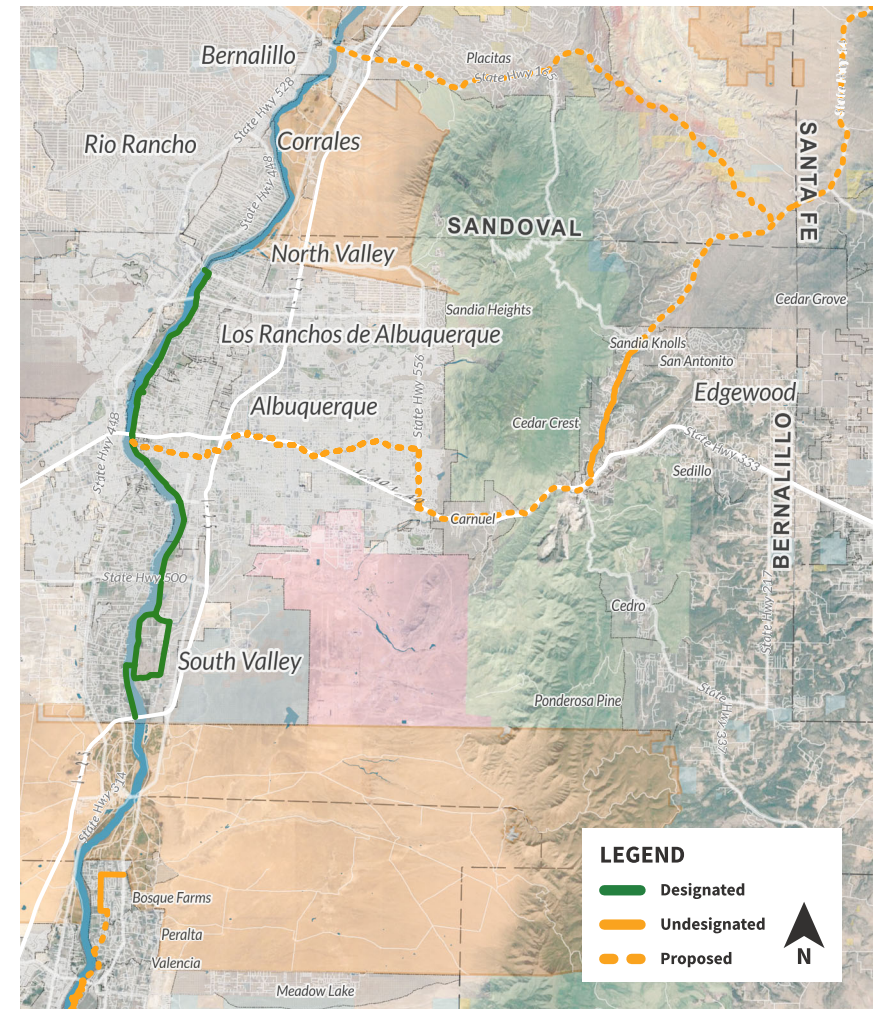
28.4 miles are Undesignated in Bernalillo County, comprised of the NM-14 Multi-Use Trail, NM-333/Old Route 66, and The Bosque Trail to Tijeras Canyon Connection through the city of Albuquerque.

UNDESIGNATED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
NM 14 Multi-Use Trail (BN-03-G)	5.74	Existing paved trail between San Antonito and just north of I-40. Designation support from NMDOT has been requested.
NM 333/ Old Route 66 (BN-05-F)	7.57	Old Route 66 bicycle corridor through Tijeras Canyon. Designation support from NMDOT has been requested.
Bosque Trail Tijeras Canyon Connection (BN-05-A)	15.05	East-west connection through Albuquerque to connect the Bosque Trail to the NM 14 through route. A revised version of a concept from the 2018 master plan. Utilizes primarily existing urban multi-use trails, with on-street bicycle facilities filling the gaps. Designation support from CABQ has been requested.

4.5 miles are Proposed in Bernalillo County, comprised of NM-14: Sandoval County Line to NM-536/Frost

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
NM 14: Sandoval County Line to NM 536/Frost Rd. (BN-03-F)	4.53	Proposed trail along state highway corridor right of way.

FIGURE 5. BERNALILLO COUNTY



COUNTY SUMMARIES

VALENCIA COUNTY

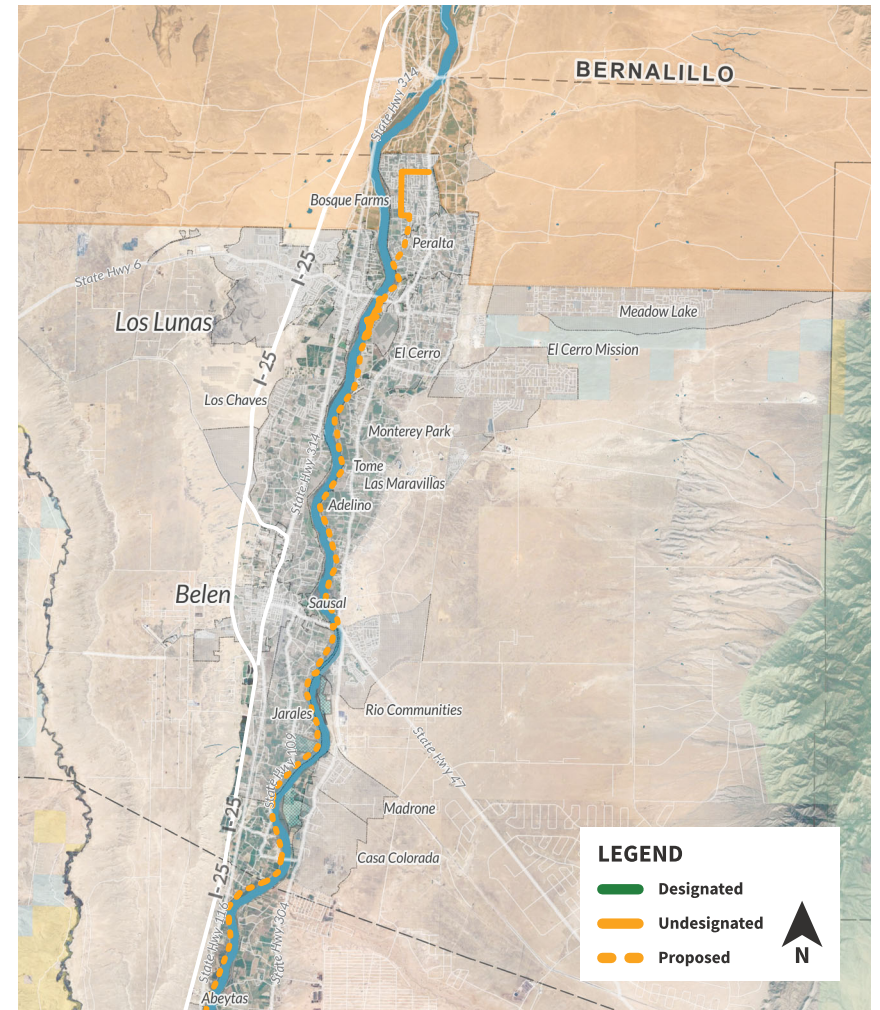
5.0 miles are Undesignated in Valencia County, comprised of the North Bosque Loop Trail and the Los Lunas River Park Trails.

UNDESIGNATED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
North Bosque Loop Trail (VL-02-A)	2.51	Paved trail in Bosque Farms near the southern edge of the Pueblo of Isleta.
Los Lunas River Park Trails (VL-03-A)	2.45	Hard-packed trails in Los Lunas Bosque.

23.8 miles are Proposed in Valencia County, comprised of the Otero Drain/Valencia East Levee and MRGCD Levee Roads from Los Lunas to the Socorro County Line.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Otero Drain/Valencia East Levee (VL-02-B)	3.04	Unpaved informal trails along the flood protection/drainage network. Would require a liability conversation with MRGCD.
MRGCD Levee Roads: Los Lunas to Socorro County Line (VL-03-B, VL-04, VL-05)	20.74	Unpaved informal trails along the flood protection/drainage network. Would require a liability conversation with MRGCD.

FIGURE 6. VALENCIA COUNTY



COUNTY SUMMARIES

SOCORRO COUNTY

4.4 miles are Designated in Socorro County, comprised of the Socorro Valley Bosque Trail.

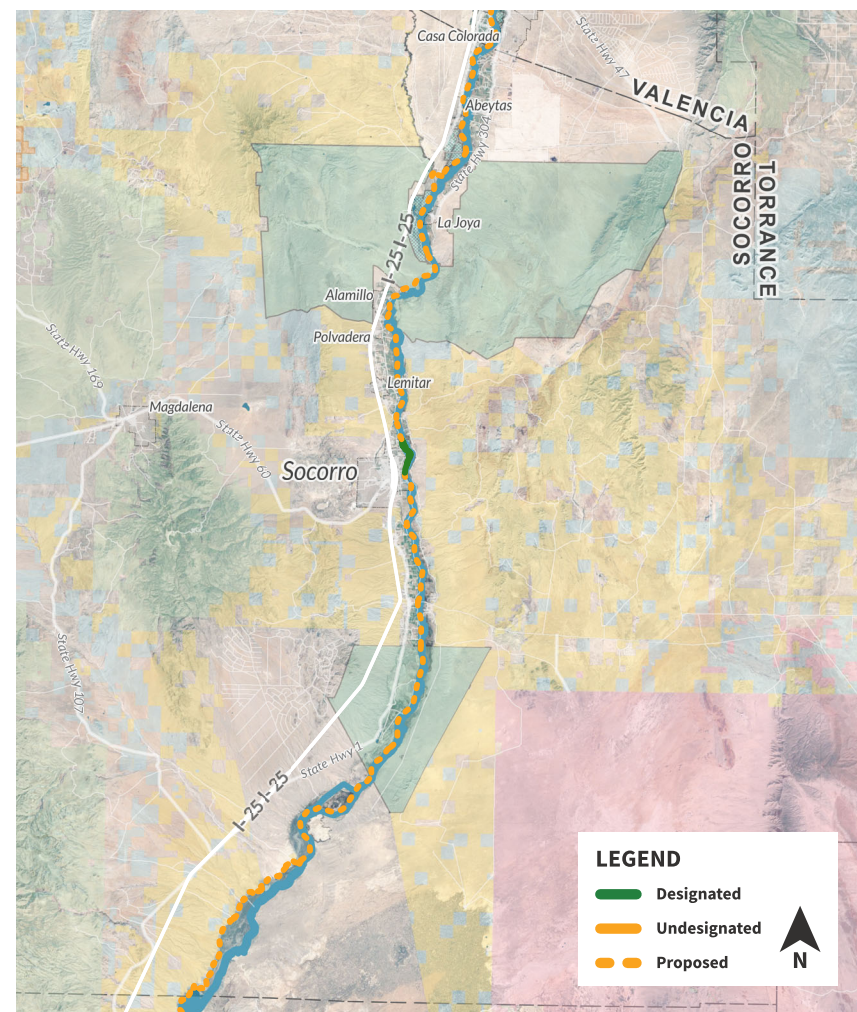
91.1 miles are Proposed in Socorro County, comprised of MRGCD Levee Roads from the Valencia County Line to the city of Socorro, and from Socorro to the Sierra County Line.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
MRGCD Levee Roads: Valencia County Line to Socorro (SC-01, SC-02, SC-03, SC-04, SC-05, SC-06-A, SC-06-B, SC-07-A)	36.44	Unpaved informal trails along the flood protection/drainage network. Would require a liability conversation with MRGCD. Includes portions through the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge.
MRGCD Levee Roads: Socorro to Sierra County Line (SC-07-C, SC-08, SC-09-A, SC-09-B, SC-10-A, SC-10-B, SC-10-C, SC-11-A, SC-11-B, SC-11-C, SC-11-D, SC-11-E, SC-11-F, SC-11-G)	54.68	Unpaved informal trails along the flood protection/drainage network. Would require a liability conversation with MRGCD. Includes portions through the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.



Site visit to the Whitfield Conservation Area near Belen, NM

FIGURE 7. SOCORRO COUNTY



COUNTY SUMMARIES

SIERRA COUNTY

24.4 miles are Designated in Sierra County, comprised of the West Lakeshore Trail, the Rock Canyon to Lakeshore Spur trail, part of the City of Elephant Butte Trail, Luchini Trail, Lakeshore Road, Turtleback Trail, and a small section of trail through the Percha Dam Campground.

10.0 miles are Undesignated in Sierra County, comprised of the north section of the Elephant Butte West Side Trail, a section of the City of Elephant Butte Trail, the Williamsburg Connector, the Caballo Equestrian Alternative route, and the Percha Dam South Spur trail.

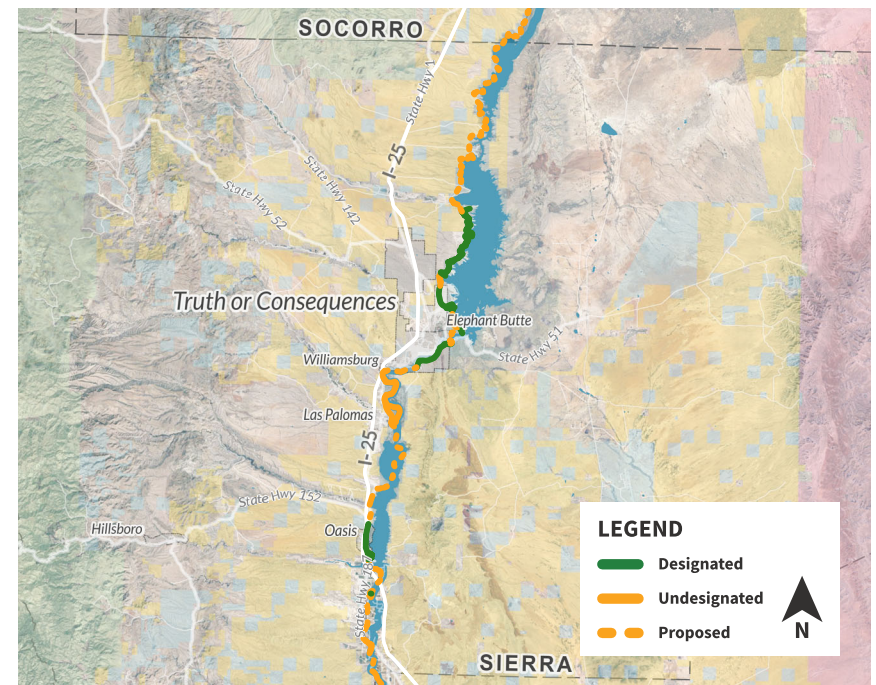
UNDESIGNATED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Elephant Butte SP West Side Trail (Central) (SR-03-D, E)	0.96	Trail along west shore of Elephant Butte.
City of Elephant Butte Trail (SR-03-F)	0.37	Undesignated portion of the City of Elephant Butte Trail. Connects the West Side Trail to the City of Elephant Butte Trail.
Williamsburg Connector (SR-06-A)	5.81	Trail through State Park-managed land north of Caballo Lake.
Caballo Equestrian Alt (SR-06-B)	2.92	Alternate equestrian loop near the river.
Percha Dam South Spur (SR-12-F)	0.27	A short unpaved spur trail which follows the river south from the Percha Dam State Park campgrounds.

49.3 miles are Proposed in Sierra County, comprised of two sections of the Elephant Butte West Side Trail, the BOR Access Road, Caballo Equestrian Trail, Riverside Park Connector, Riverside Campground trail, the Percha Dam Connector, Percha Dam Canal, Garfield Canal, and IBWC Levee Roads from the Garfield Canal to the Doña Ana County Line.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Elephant Butte West Side Trail (North) (SR-01-A, SR-01-B, SR-01-C, SR-01-D, SR-02-A, SR-02-B, SR-02-C, SR-02-D, SR-02-E, SR-02-F, SR-02-G)	21.98	Remote trail through Elephant Butte State Park from the Sierra County Line south along the river/lake.
Elephant Butte SP West Side Trail (South) (SR-04-B, SR-05-A)	4.05	Unpaved trail along the shoulder of NM-195 which branches off at the Lakeshore Road spur and continues south to connect to the Turtleback Trail.
BOR Access Road / Lower Bench (SR-05-C, D)	2.64	Southeastern continuation of the Turtleback Trail network to Williamsburg.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Elephant Butte West Side Trail (North) (SR-01-A, SR-01-B, SR-01-C, SR-01-D, SR-02-A, SR-02-B, SR-02-C, SR-02-D, SR-02-E, SR-02-F, SR-02-G)	21.98	Remote trail through Elephant Butte State Park from the Sierra County Line south along the river/lake.
Elephant Butte SP West Side Trail (South) (SR-04-B, SR-05-A)	4.05	Unpaved trail along the shoulder of NM-195 which branches off at the Lakeshore Road spur and continues south to connect to the Turtleback Trail.
BOR Access Road / Lower Bench (SR-05-C, D)	2.64	Southeastern continuation of the Turtleback Trail network to Williamsburg.

FIGURE 8. SIERRA COUNTY



COUNTY SUMMARIES

DOÑA ANA COUNTY & TEXAS

10.47 miles are Designated in Doña Ana County, comprised of Leasburg Dam State Park, the La Llorona Trail, Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, and the Sunland Park River Trail.

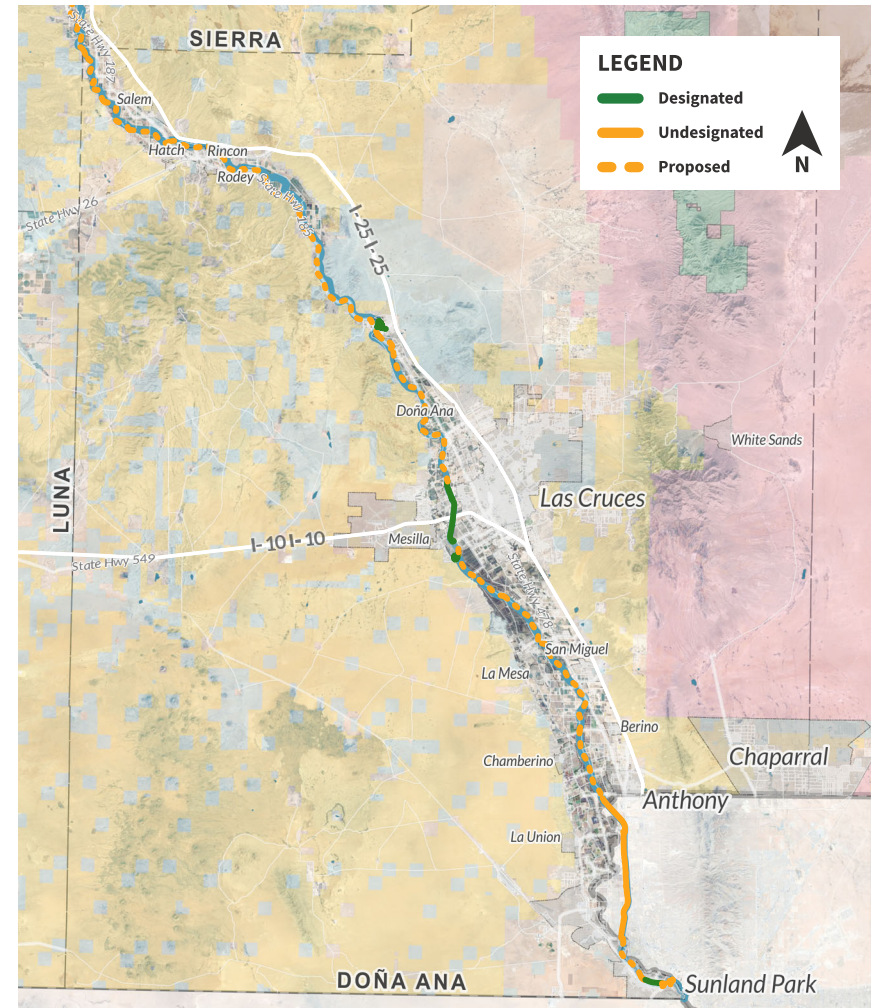
10.6 miles are Undesignated in Texas, comprised of the Río Grande Riverpark Trail.

UNDESIGNATED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
Río Grande Riverpark Trail (DA-17-B)	10.61	Existing paved trail managed by TXDOT.

82.5 miles are Proposed in Doña Ana County, comprised of multiple sections of IBWC Levee Roads and the proposed Southern Gateway/Dinotracks routes.

PROPOSED TRAIL SEGMENT	LENGTH (MILES)	DESCRIPTION
IBWC Levee Roads: Doña Ana County Line to La Llorona Trail (DA-01-A, DA-01-B, DA-01-C, DA-01-D, DA-01-E, DA-01-F, DA-02, DA-03, DA-04-A, DA-04-B, DA-04-C, DA-05-A, DA-06-A, DA-06-B, DA-06-C, DA-07-A, DA-07-B)	50.12	Proposed trail along USIBWC levee roads.
IBWC Levee Roads: La Llorona Trail to Río Grande Riverpark Trail (DA-10-A, DA-10-C, DA-11, DA-12, DA-13, DA-14, DA-15, DA-16, DA-17)	24.19	Proposed trail along USIBWC levee roads.
IBWC Levee Roads: Río Grande Riverpark Trail to Sunland Park River Trail (DA-17-C, DA-18-A)	4.29	Proposed trail along USIBWC levee roads.
Southern Gateway/DinoTracks (DA-18-D)	3.85	Proposed route and alternative routes leading to the southern terminus of the trail. Realignment to connect this site with existing trail in Sunland Park was approved at the 4/10/2026 RGTC meeting.

FIGURE 9. DOÑA ANA COUNTY



NEXT STEPS



Inside the Alvarado Transportation Center: Rail Trail site visit prior to the 24th RGTC meeting

NEXT STEPS

Over the past four years, Pland Collaborative has been the de facto face of the RGT. In recent years, the RGTC has resumed meetings, creating a public-facing space for community members to engage with the trail. Now, a non-profit organization is being developed to create a stronger foundation for the trail. As FY26 closes, there are some critical next steps that should be taken to ensure the longevity of this important project:

SHORT TERM

- 1. Prioritize support for the non-profit:** A strong non-profit entity is critical to the short and long-term success of the Rio Grande Trail. **Without continued support, the non-profit is at risk of failing.** Commission members, community members, agency staff, and other trail advocates should focus limited energy and resources on supporting the non-profit. **The non-profit will need to quickly develop a strategic plan and secure funding.**
- 2. Keep the momentum:** without contractual support, the subcommittees and stakeholder conversations risk falling apart. Additionally, at the end of Calendar Year 2026, a new state governor will be in office. This will likely lead to a significant turnover at the commission. **It's essential that the momentum of the previous year not be lost.** The non-profit is the best candidate to fill this emerging power vacuum.
- 3. Increase visibility:** Over the past year, there has been an increase in media coverage and media interest in the trail. Work with existing allies to creatively identify opportunities to increase visibility of the trail. **The greatest risk faced by the trail project is that it may lose public and community support if engagement efforts cease to be made.**

LONG TERM

- 1. Resolve policy barriers:** There are ongoing barriers to the designation of many miles of trail, **specifically regarding liability and special districts.**
- 2. Deepen connections** with allies and opponents: When the public is informed about the trail, there is often strong support expressed. However, due to the lack of consistent support, there is not a cohesive group of allies. The non-profit and other staff must **invest in building a stronger foundation of support.** Additionally, opponents to the trail have not received consistent engagement and information about trail development. This is especially true for tribal entities. It is critical to continue investing in these relationships to ensure long-term success.
- 3. Focus on a continuous statewide route:** Creating and sustaining a long-distance trail requires a multi-faceted effort. However, the critical goal is the continuous statewide route. Identify the route which is most **attainable on the shortest timeline.** There will be time for refinement in the future. However, getting a continuous, connected route is the key to building long-term success and support.

TRAIL SEGMENT PRIORITIES:

Over the past year and a half, Pland has worked closely with the reconvened Rio Grande Trail Commission to quickly designate trail segments. At this point, much of the “low-hanging fruit” has been identified and designated. Moving forward, each additional segment will be increasingly difficult to designate due to various obstacles. On the other hand, if certain policy conflicts are resolved, many miles could be quickly designated in partnership with just a couple of different agencies. The following pages display perceived priorities by county, with additional background provided.

TAOS COUNTY

- 1. Horsethief Connector:** As the crow flies, only half a mile separates the top of Horsethief Mesa from John Dunn Bridge. While the terrain is steep, a potential route has been identified. Work with BLM and other key stakeholders to begin further analysis of that connection and determine how this may impact existing parking/access challenges at John Dunn Bridge.
- 2. Bridge to Bridge:** While this connection between the Gorge Bridge and the John Dunn Bridge was identified long ago, little progress has been made in recent years. Connect with the BLM and other stakeholders to identify a next step.
- 3. Select a Priority Route, Dixon to West Rim:** In the Santa Fe Connection conversation, two different options emerged to connect the West Rim Trail to Dixon: a remote wilderness route and a riverside route. Reconvene with stakeholders from the April 2, 2026 meeting (BLM, USFS, NPS, Picuris Pueblo, NM ORD, Friends of the Rio Grande/other community groups), and have a deeper conversation about each of these options. Select one of the two to actively pursue.

RIO ARRIBA COUNTY

- 1. Deeper Investigation of the Chimayo Dixon Connection:** In the Santa Fe Taos Connection, a route was identified connecting Chimayo to Dixon. However, this proposed trail requires further investigation. Ground-truth this section and convene BLM, the NM State Land Office, and community groups in the area to better understand this land and the route.

SANTA FE COUNTY

- 1. Santa Fe River Trail:** The Santa Fe Taos Connection identified an existing multi-use trail along the Santa Fe River through the City of Santa Fe. This is a natural candidate for designation. A single gap remains along this corridor. Designation could help to build more support for filling this final gap. Work closely with the City of Santa Fe and Bike Santa Fe/other regional outdoor recreation advocacy groups to build support for designation.
- 2. La Bajada Ranch:** Santa Fe County is in the process of master planning its recent acquisition of La Bajada Ranch. They advocated for the inclusion of the Rio Grande Trail on that property. Follow up with Santa Fe County Open Space and work through the details of trail designation on that property.
- 3. Alignment refinement, Caja del Rio:** The 2018 Master Plan included the Caja del Rio as a part of the through route, and a portion of that was included for the Santa Fe to Taos Connection. Now that this connection has been reaffirmed, a deeper investigation of the route through the Caja should be completed. Additional engagement should also be done with the many community organizations and advocates working to increase protections in the Caja.

NEXT STEPS

BERNALILLO COUNTY

1. **Bernalillo Valencia County Connection:** Now that a Santa Fe Taos Connection has been identified, a similar effort needs to be made to identify the connection between Bernalillo and Valencia Counties. This is the final gap in the proposed contiguous route. The Grand Enchantment Trail, despite declining an offer to collaborate, would be a starting point for identifying a viable through route.
2. **NM-14, Northern Trail Expansion:** Now that the roundabout at Frost Rd. and NM 14 has been completed, conversations about expanding the multi-use trail northward should be restarted.

SOCORRO COUNTY

1. **Local/county adoption of MRGCD Levee Roads:** Building on the model developed with Socorro, identify other communities in Socorro County who might be able to adopt sections of levee road trail through their communities. Since these communities are all unincorporated, the county would be the adoptive agency and would need to lead these conversations.

SIERRA COUNTY

1. **Elephant Butte Lake State Park Trails:** While significant stretches of trail have been designated through Elephant Butte, there are other existing trail segments that have not yet been designated. Restate conversations with State Parks and identify barriers to designation.
2. **Caballo Lake State Park Trails:** Same as Elephant Butte. This could be the same conversation with the same stakeholders.
3. **Truth or Consequences (TorC) Connections:** There are currently gaps between Elephant Butte and TorC. Additionally, there is recently designated trail on the opposite side of the river from TorC. Connect with the active outdoor recreation community and local government allies in TorC and restart those conversations.

DOÑA ANA COUNTY

1. **Levee trail design with United States International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC):** Continue working with IBWC on an MOU or MOA allowing for the use of their levees as RGT. This critical opportunity has made significant progress in recent years. Additional effort will be required to finalize an agreement.
2. **DinoTracks Sunland Park Connection:** At the April 10, 2026 commission meeting, a realignment of the trail was approved. This realignment established that the southern trailhead of the RGT would be the DinoTracks site. As a result of this decision, reconvene stakeholders (Sunland Park, Doña Ana County, Paseo del Norte Foundation, DinoTracks/Insight El Paso) and identify which of the three alternatives for connecting Sunland Park to DinoTracks is the most viable.
3. **Washington Street Anthony Connection:** Between Sunland Park and Anthony, the state of Texas has jurisdiction of the river. Along the river in this area, there is an existing multi-use trail maintained by El Paso Parks and Recreation. The trail was developed with support from the Paso del Norte Foundation. On the north end, this trail terminates at the New Mexico border. This terminus is less than one mile from the nearest road, Washington Street. Work with key stakeholders (Anthony, TX, Anthony, NM, Doña Ana County, El Paso Parks and Recreation, Paseo del Norte Foundation) to identify a trail connection to the nearest road, Washinton Street. This could open conversations about how to continue the trail even further north into New Mexico.

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Additional work with the Río Grande Trail Commission (RGTC) was made possible through a contract with the State of New Mexico's Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), the department which hosts the RGTC.

Pland Collaborative supported the Río Grande Trail project and the Río Grande Trail Commission throughout FY26 under contracts with ORD and EMNRD. Public engagement materials, Río Grande Trail Commission meeting materials, and the content of this report were prepared by the Pland Collaborative team.



We also thank the many public sector staff, advocates, community members, and others who have spent time and resources contributing to the success of this project. Long distance trails require patience and commitment. The Río Grande Trail is on a successful trajectory due to the passion of its supporters.

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