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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Traffic signals in place on County Road 5500 (Lee Acres) Bridge

San Juan County, NM – After on-going investigation and repair by the San Juan County Public Works staff, a recommendation was made and approved by the Board of County Commissioners on February 6, 2018 to temporarily restrict travel to one-way traffic on the County Road 5500 bridge in Lee Acres until the replacement bridge can be constructed.

Traffic signals have been placed on either side of the bridge to limit the flow to one-lane travel at a time. This temporary solution is designed to keep the route open and increase safety while a replacement bridge can be designed and constructed. Reducing traffic to one lane will not only reduce the weight on the bridge and slow traffic, but hopefully will discourage the cut-through traffic on County Road 5500; many motorists use the road to avoid US 64 through Bloomfield.

The bridge was originally constructed by community members in the 1960s or early 1970s, and spans the San Juan River at a distance of 283 feet. An inspection in 2014 by NMDOT and a subsequent study by bridge engineering consultants, found the bridge to be “functionally obsolete” and recommended replacement. In 2017 the posted load rating on the bridge was reviewed and lowered from 22 tons to 13 tons. The safety of the guardrails was also called into question, and due to concerns over the impacts of collisions on the very narrow bridge, the speed limit at the bridge was reduced from 35 to 25 MPH. Unfortunately, these restrictions are consistently ignored and are difficult to enforce.

Closure of the bridge has been considered, and while safety is of the utmost importance, convenience for citizens who travel this route is strongly being taken into consideration. The bridge has an average daily usage of 6000 trips.

Construction of a new, replacement bridge is expected to begin in 2019, with the design and planning underway. San Juan County funded an alternatives study and initial design concepts with a bridge engineering firm in 2017. Current estimates to complete the design and build the replacement are approximately \$5 million dollars.

Follow San Juan County NM on Facebook or Twitter for 5500 bridge closure / construction updates.

Please direct all press and related inquires to Susan Hakanson,
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