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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County Road 5500 (Lee Acres) Bridge to be one-lane until replacement

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

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. Through a 2014 inspection by NMDOT and a subsequent study by bridge engineering consultants, the bridge is considered “functionally obsolete” and recommended for 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 utmost importance, convenience for the 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 Spring of 2019, with the design and planning already 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.

The temporary solution to keep the route open and increase safety is to limit travel on the bridge to one lane. Traffic signals will be placed on either side of the bridge to limit the flow to one lane travel at a time. This 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. Signs will be posted keeping motorists aware of the one-lane restriction, the likelihood of delays, and a means to report overweight vehicles. Signs along the route and notices on social media postings will help to make residents aware of changes or delays.

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, San Juan County Public Relations Manager, at shakanson@sjcounty.net or 505-386-8325.

