



Changes to U.S. 550 can make Cuba a healthier and safer place to live.

The Village of Cuba will soon receive funding from the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) to improve sidewalks and lighting on U.S. 550. NMDOT is beginning to plan what the project will look like. ***There are many ways that U.S. 550 can be made safer for pedestrians and many good reasons for making it safer.***

Changes to U.S. 550 can make it safer and more inviting. There are different ways to slow traffic, to shorten the distance for people crossing the street, and to make it easier for drivers to see the people trying to cross the street. ***Here are some ways to “calm” or slow traffic down:***



SPEED FEEDBACK SIGNS tell drivers their speed (measured by radar) and the speed limit on the road.



MEDIAN ISLANDS provide a safe place in the middle of the road for people to stop and wait for traffic. If there is a median island, people do not have to wait for traffic to clear in both directions. They can cross when traffic is clear in only one direction.



“GATEWAY” SIGNS let drivers know they are leaving a rural highway and entering a community.



BULB-OUTS, OR EXTENSIONS of the sidewalk at either end of a crosswalk, make the distance people have to cross shorter and make it easier for drivers to see the people trying to cross the street.



More people walking around the U.S. 550 area in Cuba can boost the economy and add to a sense of community.

If the streets feel safe and welcoming, local residents and visitors are more likely to walk around town, stop to visit with each other, and shop in local stores.

People who live in areas where it is easy and nice to walk are more likely to be active, which can make them healthier.



Recommended sidewalk safety features for pedestrians:

- ◆ Sidewalks should be at least 5 feet across so that two people can walk side-by-side or pass each other easily.
- ◆ Sidewalks should be continuous along both sides of the highway.
- ◆ Sidewalks should be easier for everyone to use, including those in wheelchairs or pushing strollers.
- ◆ Sidewalks should have a “buffer zone” or area between the sidewalk and the roadway. This helps separate the people walking along the highway from the traffic. This space should be at least 4 feet across and could be dirt, paved, or could have plants.
- ◆ Sidewalks should have enough street lighting so that people on the sidewalk can see where they are walking and so that walkers can be seen by drivers. Lighting also helps people to see who is around them and can prevent crime.

“ To improve Highway 550 would enhance the atmosphere of the community, the quality of life and the environment...the entire community would benefit. People often share with me as a council member that Cuba is beautiful but the downtown environment lacks so many upgrades such as sidewalks and lighting. ”

— Cuba Village Council Member and
U.S. 550 business Owner

“ If we had crosswalks and safe walkways, it would make a huge difference. I would love to see changes made to the highway. It’s so dangerous, even just walking from my store across the street. I don’t think drivers are inconsiderate or rude; they are just unaware...there are no signs to educate them. I have a child who is pre-diabetic and I would love for us to be active together here in a convenient place. My children don’t play in their front yard because I’m afraid. The changes would be for the elderly, families, anyone who wants to walk — it’s for everybody. ”

— Cuba Parent, U.S. 550 Business Owner and Resident



The Step Into Cuba Alliance, the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center’s VIVA (Village Interventions and Venues for Activity) team, and Healthy Kids Healthy Communities team worked together on this flyer. References are available from the Prevention Research Center. Contact Emily Pilitch, epilitch@salud.unm.edu or (505) 272-4462. 05-06-2010.