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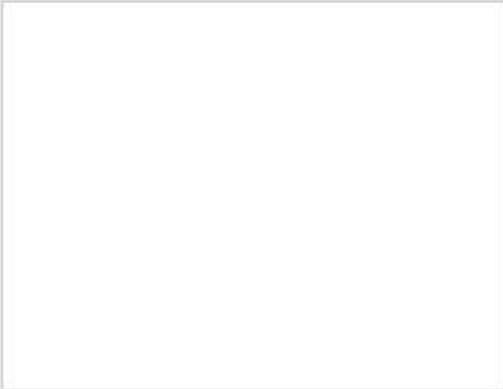
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(Photo inset) A real-time image of road conditions at La Bajada on I-25.



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Want a photo image of the latest conditions on I-40 in Tijeras Canyon? Perhaps a snapshot of how things are looking at La Bajada on I-25?

Or, how about text messages on your Blackberry about current road conditions before driving home from work?

All that and much more is now available, free of charge, through the New Mexico Department of Transportation's newly upgraded Web site at nmroads.com.

Real Time Sites, a Web design and software services company in Albuquerque, did an \$80,000 overhaul of the site to offer motorists user-friendly access to real-time information on road conditions throughout New Mexico.

The DOT unveiled the new site on Dec. 19, said Charles Remkes, manager of the DOT's Intelligent Transportation Systems, or ITS Operations.

"We wanted to get information to the motoring public in the most efficient, effective, and timely manner possible," Remkes said. "Real Time Sites has now established a platform that meets all those needs. The information available will allow motorists and commercial vehicle operators to plan their trips, or alter their driving plans, while en route to where they're going."

The state agency originally hired Real Time to design a user-friendly Web site in 2007, after receiving criticism from motorists who lacked timely information on road conditions during major snow storms the previous winter. DOT paid Real Time \$50,000 to design the original site, which launched in October 2007.

That site, however, only had a static map of roadways around the state with clickable text updates about conditions that motorists could read.

"We decided to upgrade it, because, from a user perspective, we realized we could offer so much more," Remkes said.

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Remkes

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Now, the site offers real-time images of key traffic areas in the central Rio Grande corridor through on-site cameras at La Bajada on I-25, at I-40 in the East Mountains, on State Highway 550 near the Santa Ana Casino and at I-25, and near the Corrales intersection on New Mexico 528.

Motorists also can view sections of Interstate 40 in Albuquerque, where highway construction is under way. And, DOT is planning to add more cameras at Clines Corners, Raton Pass, the Continental Divide near Gallup, and Glorieta Pass in northern New Mexico.

Motorists also can subscribe to updates sent via e-mail, or text messages about roadway conditions. They can access regularly updated information on the Web site about everything from road closures and driving conditions around the state to crashes, construction and weather advisories.

The site has so far proved very popular, said Real Time President Steve Schroeder.

"During the last snow storm on Dec. 23, we had more than 40,000 visitors to the site," Schroeder said. "That broke all previous records. We've been hovering between 11,000 and 24,000 visitors a day since then."

Real Time will get \$4,000 a month to maintain the site, up from \$1,000 per month for the previous site.

Such Web upgrades and monthly fees for hosting and maintaining sites have become a mainstay for Real Time, which recently overhauled the [Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce](#)  's Web site.

But John DiRuggiero, the DOT's Web master and information technology expert for ITS Operations, said the amount charged by Real Time is a bargain.

"Compared to other providers, Real Time is able to offer map-based Web information at a much lower cost because DOT is providing GIS maps," DiRuggiero said. "The maps are not tied to Google Earth or the like, and they can be changed as needed. There are no server fees or hit fees to access maps."

Moreover, Real Time built content management software into the site to allow DOT to add new features free of charge. ITS Operations, for example, might soon add colored lines on the map to indicate traffic congestion levels on roadways around the state.

"We have scalability to add new elements to the site as needed," DiRuggiero said.

"It's like Leggos. We can snap in new stuff and build off of what we've got."