



Rio Grande Trail Santa Fe/Taos Connection - Alignment Proposals

1. Background

The [Rio Grande Trail \(RGT\)](#) is a statewide initiative to develop a long-distance, multi-use trail that follows the Rio Grande River corridor, connecting communities, landscapes, and cultures across New Mexico.

While the [2018 RGT Master Plan](#) proposed an alignment throughout most of the state, a critical gap remains between Santa Fe County and Taos County. Additionally, some of the master plan alignments in Santa Fe County are being reconsidered, especially within the context of identifying a connection to Taos County.

The Santa Fe/Taos connection is a critical link for the RGT. Identifying a route for the trail between these areas will strengthen regional connectivity between two of New Mexico's most visited and culturally rich areas.

The following narratives outline the three different alignments being considered. Maps of each alignment are included. Our [interactive map](#) is the best way to view the different alignment options.

Moving from south to north, all three proposed alignments begin at the Santa Fe County line along New Mexico Highway 14 (NM 14) and continue north. This southernmost point is the current proposed alignment as identified in the master plan. The alignments continue north, with all three terminating at the southern end of the West Rim Trail along the Rio Grande Gorge in Taos County.





Summary of the Three Alignments

All three alignments share the following characteristics:

- Primarily utilize Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), State Trust, New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), and other publicly managed land.
- Utilize existing trails, roads, and other established rights-of-way to the greatest extent possible to minimize environmental impact.
- Utilize existing urban multi-use trails through the City of Santa Fe.
- Intersect in the City of Santa Fe.
- Pass through the Santa Fe National Forest Wilderness Area, which prohibits bicycle use. A parallel bicycle-friendly alternative is being identified.
- Avoid all sovereign tribal lands.
- Avoid private property.

Alignment 1 stays closest to the Rio Grande River. Alignment 2 and 3 primarily use the Santa Fe National Forest as a method for moving between the two counties.



1. Alignment #1- Purple/Magenta

Alignment Option 1 utilizes the 2018 master plan alignment along NM 14 north to the village of Los Cerrillos. From there, this route diverges from the original alignment, turning west through Los Cerrillos onto Main Street. The route then turns north onto First Street and west again onto Waldo Canyon Road. It continues northwest on Waldo Canyon Road until it reaches I-25.

The route continues northeast along the I-25 Frontage Road. It crosses I-25 on the existing low traffic Canada de Santa Fe overpass and enters the Santa Fe County-owned La Bajada Ranch. It continues through the Tres Rios Ranch until it connects with a portion of the master plan alignment in the Caja del Rio.

Through the Caja del Rio, the trail follows a portion of the master plan alignment. Shortly after passing the Forest Service (USFS) managed Headquarters Well Trailhead, it turns south and connects to a paved trail along Caja del Rio Road. This section of paved trail was designated as RGT during the Sept 19, 2025, RGT Commission meeting.

Once this paved section of designated trail reaches the Santa Fe River, this alignment continues northeast along the Santa Fe River Trail. The Santa Fe River Trail is mostly paved, with some sections of unpaved trail. There is also a short segment of the trail that is not yet complete.

This route continues along the Santa Fe River through most of Santa Fe until it reaches Palace Avenue. From there, the paved trail ends, and the alignment utilizes informal riverside pathways. The route follows the Santa Fe River until it turns north on Gonzales Road for one block. It then turns east on Cerro Gordo Road, a 25-mile-per-hour residential street, for ~1 mile until it reaches the Dale Ball Central trailhead. This alignment then utilizes an existing unpaved trail north to the intersection of Highway 475/Hyde Park Road and Cerros Colorados.

The alignment crosses Highway 475 and continues north on Dale Ball until it connects with the 4 Borrego Trail. The route continues north through the Santa Fe National Forest, staying as far west as possible to avoid strenuous climbs.

At the Frijoles Canyon Trail, the alignment turns northwest. Where the Frijoles Canyon Trail meets the Rio Frijoles, the route proceeds northwest along the Rio Frijoles on an existing trail. On the western edge of the USFS at the Frijoles Canyon Trailhead, the route continues north on the singletrack Medio Dia Trail. The route continues along the western boundary of the USFS until it turns west into BLM land, southwest of Cordova. crosses briefly into State



Trust land and back onto BLM property as it travels north. The alignment crosses over SR 76, continuing north following various arroyos, including Arroyo de Cueva.

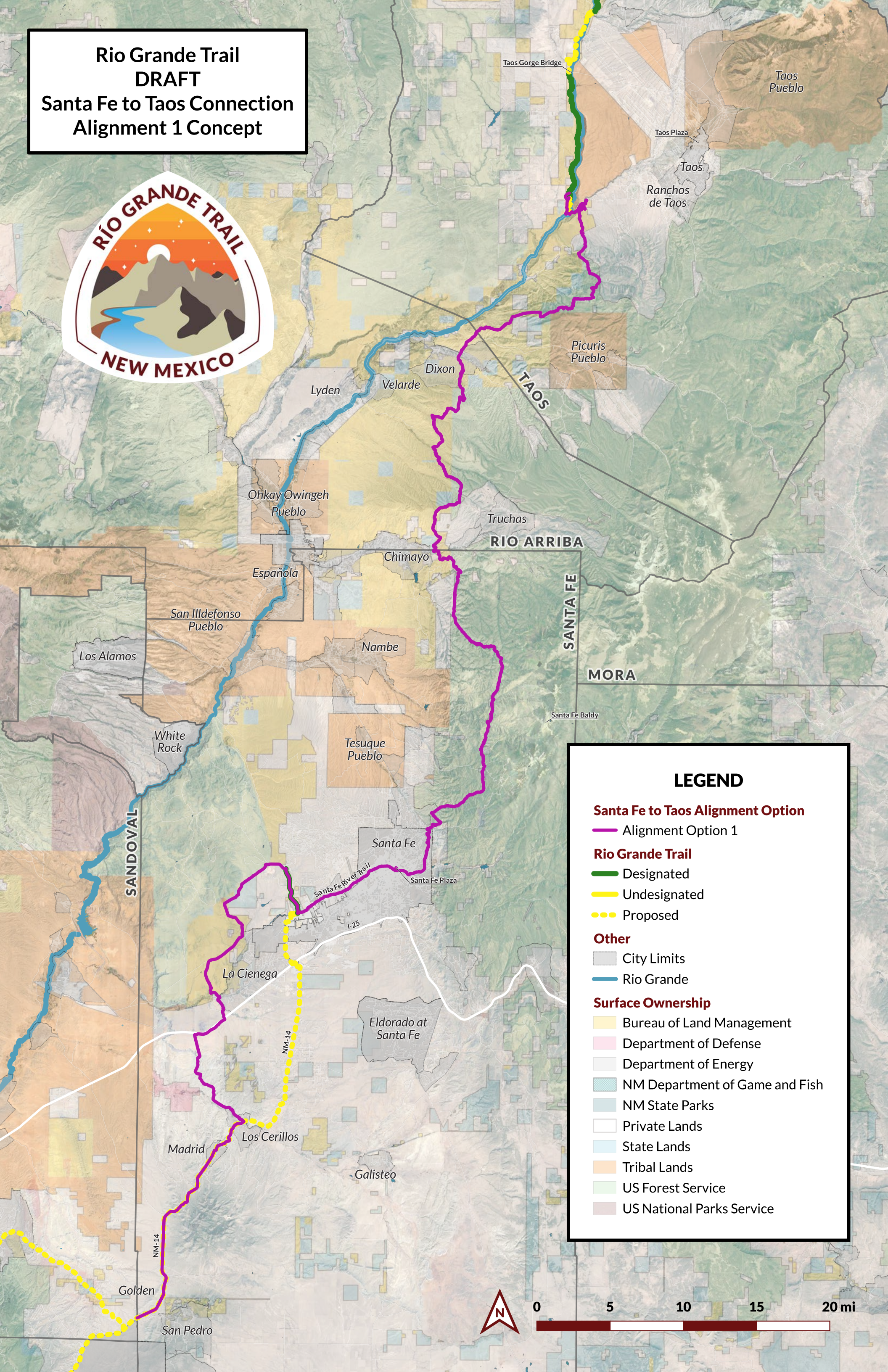
As the alignment approaches the top of the Mesa De La Caja, it turns east, traveling briefly through State Trust land, then onto USFS-managed land, on the western edge of Truchas. It continues northwest onto BLM land, crossing the Rio de Truchas and the Canada del Apache del Ojito, and utilizing portions of County Road 435.

Once it reaches the Canada de Las Entranas arroyo, the trail begins moving east again, back onto USFS land. The alignment uses County Road 68 to continue north, crossing back onto BLM land. It continues north through Apodaca, outside of Dixon, on Highway SR-75 before reentering BLM land. The alignment continues through BLM land, traveling northeast, following the Canada de Apodaca arroyo. From there, it continues onto a portion of the Old Spanish Trail, which is part of the master plan alignment.

The alignment departs from the Old Spanish Trail to divert around private property. It continues through BLM land until it crosses back onto USFS land northeast of Picuris Pueblo. It continues northeast and then northwest along Forest Road (FR) 606. It departs the USFS land and goes back onto BLM land. It eventually departs this road and moves north, crossing the Arroyo Hondo.

Following old roads, the alignment crosses under NM 68 through a culvert, continuing north through BLM land before wrapping along the east side of the Rio Pueblo de Taos Canyon. It continues hugging the canyon edge on existing trails until reaching the Upper Trailhead of the Slide Trail. This alignment follows the Slide Trail down to the bottom of the Rio Grande canyon. At the river, the alignment utilizes the Taos Junction Bridge to cross the river. The alignment then continues west on NM 567, which it follows up the canyon until it connects to a portion of designated RGT at the South Trailhead of the West Rim Trail

**Rio Grande Trail
DRAFT
Santa Fe to Taos Connection
Alignment 1 Concept**



LEGEND

Santa Fe to Taos Alignment Option

- Alignment Option 1

Rio Grande Trail

- Designated
- Undesignated
- Proposed

Other

- City Limits
- Rio Grande

Surface Ownership

- Bureau of Land Management
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- NM Department of Game and Fish
- NM State Parks
- Private Lands
- State Lands
- Tribal Lands
- US Forest Service
- US National Parks Service





2. Alignment #2 - Turquoise

Alignment Option 2 begins with the existing alignment along NM 14. After passing through Madrid and Los Cerillos, it turns east and follows Camino Los Abuelos Road. It continues along this road until it ends at Galisteo.

From here, the route follows NM 41 north through Galisteo and then northeast until it intersects with US 285. The alignment follows 285 for a short distance until it intersects with the Santa Fe Southern railway line.

At this junction, the alignment begins to follow the Santa Fe Rail Trail, a wide singletrack/doubletrack, first to the west from US 285, and then north to Santa Fe. The Rail Trail begins as an unpaved trail and then becomes paved as it moves into the City of Santa Fe.

This alignment follows the Santa Fe Rail Trail until it terminates at the Santa Fe Rail Yard. This route then turns east on Montezuma Avenue and continues north along Guadalupe Road until it reaches the Santa Fe River Trail.

This alignment follows the Santa Fe River Trail through Santa Fe until it reaches Palace Avenue. From there, the paved trail ends, and the alignment utilizes informal riverside pathways. At Palace, the trail turns north and follows Gonzales Rd to NM 475.

The alignment follows NM 475 until the Little Tesuque Creek Open Space Trailhead. From here, the route leaves the highway and continues north into the Santa Fe National Forest on single-track hiking paths.

Briefly, the alignment follows the Juan Trail, then turns east onto the Saddleback Trail/Chamisa Trail Loop. After roughly 3.5 miles, the alignment leaves the Chamisa Trail and heads northeast on the Winsor National Recreation Trail.

The Winsor Trail takes the alignment up to and past the Santa Fe Ski Area, where it continues northeast into the Pecos Wilderness, gaining elevation through a set of switchbacks. Once atop the ridge, the alignment travels north, hugging the ridgeline up to Santa Fe Baldy.

The route then goes southeast down the mountain to Lake Katherine, where it connects to the Skyline Trail, which travels east into San Miguel County, and then north into Mora County. The trail continues northeast, beneath Pecos Baldy, East Pecos Baldy, and past Pecos Baldy Lake.



From here, the alignment goes north along another ridgeline, drops below the ridgeline to the east, and continues north under the Truchas Peaks until it meets the Truchas Lakes. It briefly turns to the east before turning north, off the Skyline Trail, and onto the West Fork Trail.

The West Fork Trail takes the alignment up to the ridgeline between North Truchas Peak and Chimayosos Peak, and then down from the ridgeline into Carson National Forest. The alignment follows the West Fork Trail north to the Santa Barbara Trailhead and Campground.

From Santa Barbara, the alignment turns east and follows the Indian Creek Trail, then the Comales Trail north to the Comales Trailhead and NM 518. After traveling a short distance east along the highway, the alignment crosses the road and arrives at the Tio Maes Canyon Trailhead.

The route follows Maes Canyon Trail north until it ends at a series of doubletrack trails and dirt roads. First, the alignment follows Amole Trail to the north, then Gallegos Trail northwest, then west. At the next intersection, the trail turns sharply back to the west and follows Forest Road (FR) 442 until it reaches a clearing. Here, the alignment veers north on Little Rio Gallegos Road until it reaches Little Rio Grande Road/FR 439.

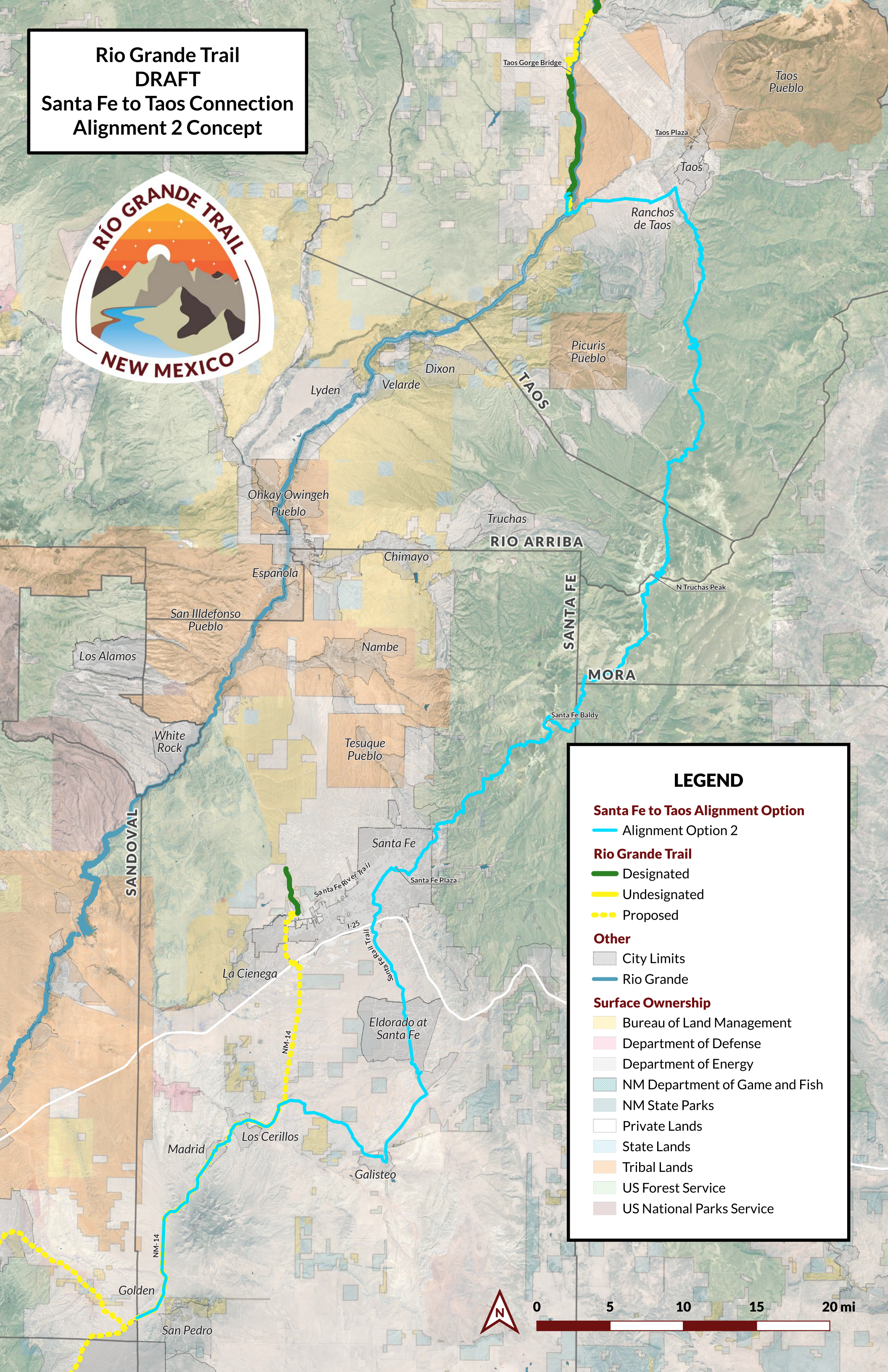
Following Little Rio Grande Road to the west and then north, the alignment continues along this unpaved road until it reaches NM 518. The trail follows the highway for a short distance until it reaches FR 438 on the east side of the road.

The alignment departs from FR 438, where it turns to the east, and proceeds north on the Rio Grande Del Rancho Trail until it once again connects to NM 518 southeast of Talpa.

It then continues northwest along NM 518 through Talpa before turning southwest onto SR 68. The alignment continues along SR 68 to County Road C110. From here, the trail continues west on this unpaved road until it reaches the Upper Trailhead of the Slide Trail.

This alignment then follows the Slide Trail down to the bottom of the Rio Grande canyon. At the river, the route crosses at the Taos Junction Bridge. The alignment then continues west on SR 567, which it follows up the canyon until it connects to a portion of designated RGT at the South Trailhead of the West Rim Trail

**Rio Grande Trail
DRAFT
Santa Fe to Taos Connection
Alignment 2 Concept**



LEGEND

Santa Fe to Taos Alignment Option

- Alignment Option 2

Rio Grande Trail

- Designated
- Undesignated
- Proposed

Other

- City Limits
- Rio Grande

Surface Ownership

- Bureau of Land Management
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- NM Department of Game and Fish
- NM State Parks
- Private Lands
- State Lands
- Tribal Lands
- US Forest Service
- US National Parks Service





3. Alignment #3 – Orange

This alignment follows the existing alignment along NM 14 from Golden through Madrid and Los Cerillos to the intersection of NM 14 and NM 599 on the outskirts of Santa Fe.

At this junction, the alignment turns west on NM 599. The trail follows NM 599 north until it meets Airport Rd, where it turns east briefly before going north on Constellation Dr to the El Camino Real Park Trailhead.

The alignment then continues northeast along the Santa Fe River Trail. A small portion of this trail between the El Camino Real Park Trailhead and the Caja del Rio Connection Trail is an undesignated proposed trail from the 2018 master plan. The remainder of the Santa Fe River Trail has yet to be proposed.

This alignment continues northeast along the Santa Fe River Trail. The Santa Fe River Trail is mostly paved, with some sections of unpaved trail. There is also a short segment of the trail that is not yet complete.

This route continues along the Santa Fe River through most of Santa Fe until it reaches Palace Avenue. From there, the paved trail ends, and the alignment utilizes informal riverside pathways. The route follows the Santa Fe River until it turns north on Gonzales Road for one block. It then turns east on Cerro Gordo Road, a 25-mile-per-hour residential street, for ~1 mile until it reaches the Dale Ball Central trailhead. This alignment then utilizes an existing unpaved trail north to the intersection of Highway 475/Hyde Park Road and Cerros Colorados.

The alignment crosses Highway 475 and continues north on Dale Ball until it connects with the 4 Borrego Trail. The route continues north through the Santa Fe National Forest, staying as far west as possible to avoid strenuous climbs. The alignment follows the Juan Trail/Dale Ball Trail north into the Santa Fe National Forest to Tesuque Creek.

At Tesuque Creek, the alignment heads northeast on the Winsor National Recreation Trail, following it all the way past Santa Fe Ski Area into the Pecos Wilderness, and to its intersection with the Skyline Trail. The Skyline trail takes the alignment up and over the Santa Fe Baldy Ridgeline and then north to Lake Katherine.



The alignment continues to follow the Skyline Trail east, into San Miguel County, and then north until it meets the Cave Creek Trail. The trail follows the Cave Creek Trail southeast to Pancuela Campground, just before the Jacks Creek Trailhead.

The alignment then takes the Dockweiler Trail northeast until its intersection with the Jacks Creek Trail, which it follows north until it meets the Skyline Trail again. From here, the alignment goes north along another ridgeline, drops below that ridge to the east, and continues north under the Truchas Peaks until it meets the Truchas Lakes. Here, it turns briefly to the east before turning north, off the Skyline Trail, and onto the West Fork Trail.

The West Fork Trail takes the alignment up to the ridgeline between North Truchas Peak and Chimayosos Peak, and then down from the ridge into Carson National Forest. The alignment follows the West Fork Trail north to the Santa Barbara Trailhead and Campground.

From Santa Barbara, the alignment turns east and follows the Indian Creek Trail up and over Ripley Point. Turning east onto the Comales Cutoff Trail, the alignment continues northeast and then north along Agua Piedra Creek on the Agua Piedra Trail.

At Cordova Canyon Trailhead, the trail turns east, briefly following NM 518 until it reaches Tres Ritos. Then, the alignment goes north up La Cueva Canyon, following another single-track trail system. The La Cueva Canyon Trail turns east before becoming the Ojito Maes Trail, which takes the alignment west to an intersection of trails.

At this point, the alignment goes briefly northeast to another junction, and then north on Forest Road (FR) 442. The forest road takes the alignment to the Little Rio Grande Trail, which meets the Palociento Trail and FR 440.

This series of roads goes northeast and connects with the Rito de Olla Trail in Rincon Canyon. The alignment continues up the Rito de Olla Trail, past the Bernadin Lake offshoot, where the trail becomes FR 438.

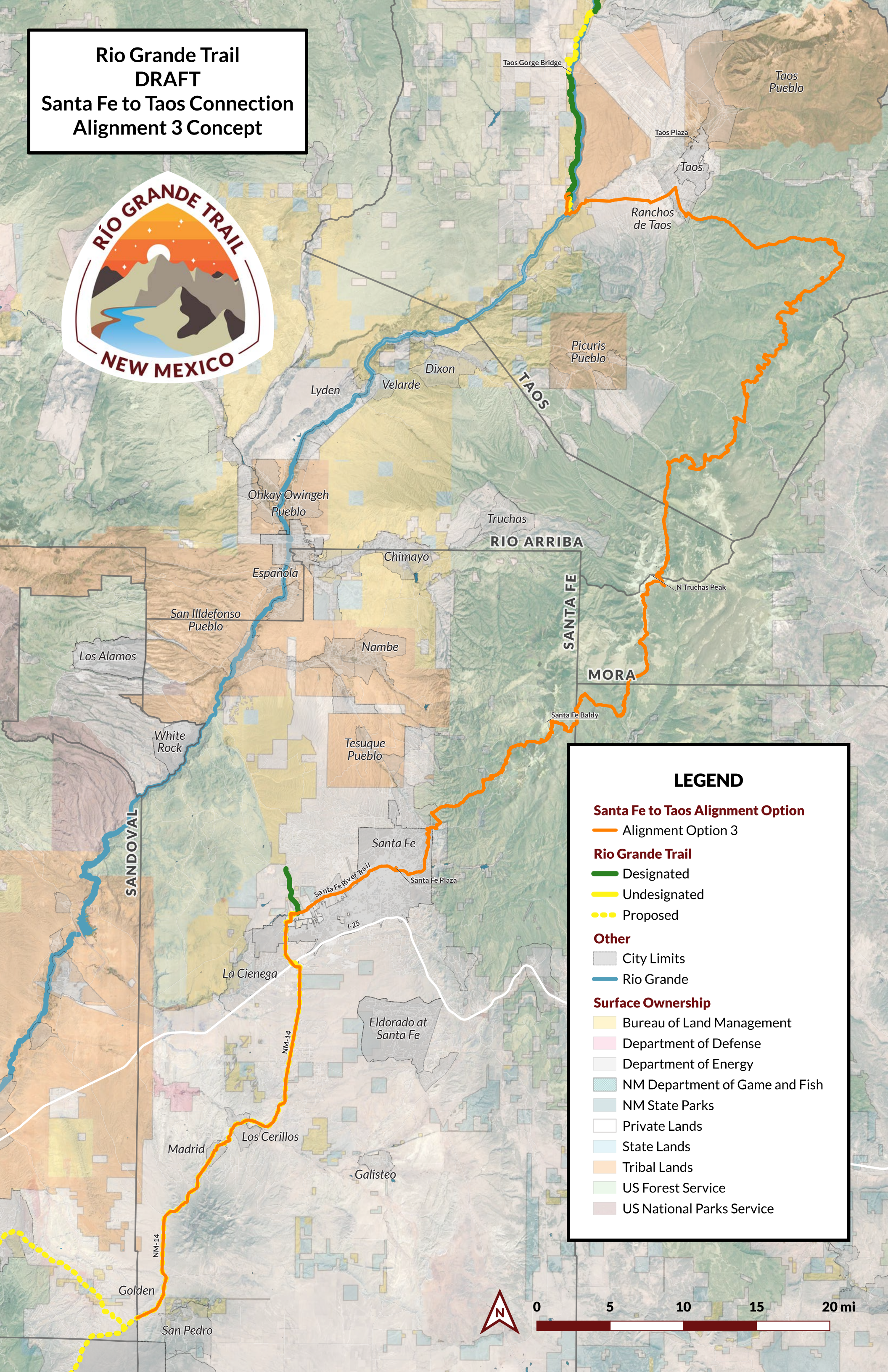
Where FR 438 becomes FR 478, the trail turns to the north onto S+H Trail. This trail turns to the northwest before meeting FR 437 and the Rio Chiquito. The alignment follows the Rio Chiquito Trail to the west and then northwest. Once the trail reaches FR 437/Rio Chiquito Road, it continues west on this road until it reaches NM 518.

It continues northwest along NM 518 through Talpa before turning southwest onto SR 68. The alignment continues along SR 68 to County Road C110. From here, the trail continues west on this unpaved road until it reaches the Upper Trailhead of the Slide Trail.



This alignment then follows the Slide Trail down to the bottom of the Rio Grande canyon. At the river, the alignment utilizes the Taos Junction Bridge to cross the river. The alignment then continues west on SR 567, which it follows up the canyon until it connects to a portion of designated RGT at the South Trailhead of the West Rim Trail.

**Rio Grande Trail
DRAFT
Santa Fe to Taos Connection
Alignment 3 Concept**



LEGEND

Santa Fe to Taos Alignment Option
 — Alignment Option 3

Rio Grande Trail
 — Designated
 — Undesignated
 ••• Proposed

Other
 [Grey Box] City Limits
 [Blue Line] Rio Grande

Surface Ownership
 [Yellow Box] Bureau of Land Management
 [Pink Box] Department of Defense
 [Light Grey Box] Department of Energy
 [Blue Box] NM Department of Game and Fish
 [Teal Box] NM State Parks
 [White Box] Private Lands
 [Light Blue Box] State Lands
 [Orange Box] Tribal Lands
 [Light Green Box] US Forest Service
 [Brown Box] US National Parks Service

