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State Motor Vehicle Division Plans to Permanently Close Cottonwood Branch Office in Albuquerque This Summer

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division today announced that it will permanently close its Cottonwood Mall branch in Albuquerque and redeploy the 15 employees to other city offices to maintain service levels to customers.

The closure, effective July 2, will save MVD \$125,000 annually - about 10% of the \$1.2 million budget cut that MVD received in the recently enacted FY 2011 state budget. MVD's annual general fund budget in FY10 was \$14.2 million, and it was reduced to \$13 million in FY11.

"We have to run MVD leaner and smarter in the face of smaller budgets," said Rick Homans, Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department. "While we may be reducing the number of state-run offices, we are developing many more online capabilities and encouraging our private partners to expand their operations."

Michael Sandoval, director of the MVD, also announced that MVD will be closing all state-run offices at 3:30 p.m. instead of 4 p.m. - effective July 6 - to avoid \$105,000 in annual overtime costs.

Another cost-saving measure MVD plans to adopt this summer is to discontinue printing of the driver's manual that cost the agency \$50,000 a year. Instead, the driver's manual will be posted online, and MVD will explore any potential partnerships with private businesses to print the manuals at no cost to the Division or the public.

"We are investigating every opportunity to save taxpayer dollars and, at the same time, our goal is to maintain and even improve our service to the customers," Sandoval said. "It's a big challenge, and we're tackling it with a positive attitude." Sandoval noted that many of New Mexico's cost-cutting measures are occurring in other states as well.

Sandoval also said the MVD is investigating the possibility of discontinuing, or cutting back, use of the MVD's 1-800# that costs the division \$375,000 a year.

The savings announced and being considered total \$655,000, meaning the MVD still has to reduce its annual operating costs by at least another \$545,000. Sandoval said the Division is reviewing additional actions to meet the new budget requirements for FY 11.

Sandoval said the MVD last year launched a new, more customer-friendly website – www.mvd.newmexico.gov - and implemented a series of initiatives to improve operational efficiencies, such as fast service for simple transactions, special lanes for senior citizens and the disabled and on-line registration renewals at a discount. The new website also allows customers to check estimated wait times at most state-run MVD offices; download, fill and print most commonly used forms before visiting an MVD offices; and access accurate and detailed information on various MVD transactions.

These initiatives are part of a larger program, DRIVE MVD (Delivering Results, Innovation, Value and Efficiency) that will provide a multi-year focus on improved customer service and providing different and practical options to New Mexicans when dealing with MVD.