

Sandia Peak Tramway is back in business

Upgrades will result in slightly faster, more efficient trips for visitors

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The Sandia Peak Tramway reopens Thursday with a new engine and a new control and drive system after closing for renovations in January.

Despite the significant upgrades, visitors might be hard-pressed to notice the difference.

“If you’ve ridden the tram a lot, frequently, you’ll notice that speed-ups and slow-downs as you’re on the tower or nearing the tower are far more smooth. The rate at which they slow down and speed up minimizes the actual swing of the cabin, and it just feels smoother,” said Michael Donovan, general manager of the Sandia Peak Tramway. “But I think the average passenger would be challenged to know that.”

The trip will be slightly faster by about a minute and a half, and operations should be more efficient, Donovan said.

The new drive system also uses significantly less power.

“PNM might be a little disappointed that our power bills will be reduced, but we’re doing our part to protect the environment and utilize less electricity,” Donovan said.

Along with a new engine, the tram also has a new weather-monitoring system with cameras that watch the track ropes and cables. Previously, the tram used a telescope from the terminals



The Sandia Peak Tram carries a load of passengers to the top of the Sandia Mountains in December. EDDIE MOORE/JOURNAL

to monitor the track. The new monitoring system will get a test immediately, as high winds are predicted this week.

Historically, the first two weeks of March have brought many visitors from Texas and Oklahoma who are traveling during spring break, Donovan said, so the tram should be busy as it reopens.

Business typically slows down after spring break but begins to build up in the summer, and the tram operates at or near capacity by the time Memorial Day weekend comes.

“We’d like to thank everybody for their patience with us while we’ve been shut down, but we’re super-excited to reopen. And for our locals and visitors that want to come access the Sandia Mountains, the tram is open for business,” Donovan said.

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