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U.S. 50 Access Planned to Ben't Old Fort Site

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U.S. 50 access planned *to Bent's fort* to Bent's Old Fort site

LA JUNTA — The National Park Service is moving ahead with plans to extend access facilities at the Bent's Old Fort reconstruction site between La Junta and Las Animas, U.S. Rep. Frank E. Evans, D-Colo., reported Wednesday.

Although complete details have not been worked out as yet, Evans revealed that the Park Service intends to buy enough land to build an access road off U.S. 50, about 6 miles east of La Junta, plus parking lot and other facilities. Preliminary work could start on expansion as early as Oct. 1, 1977.

"Presently, tourists must use Colorado 194 to get to the fort," Evans said. "However, we received a petition from farmers on the

road complaining that agricultural traffic was held up because of the tourists. The new plans will turn Colorado 194 back into an agricultural road again."

Evans said he felt that, with the new access road off U.S. 50, more motorists would stop and inspect the fort site. The Park Service also plans to put up a parking lot, rest rooms and trails, plus a foot bridge over the Arkansas River, which is between the fort site and U.S. 50.

It was Evans' special appropriations work in 1974 that got Bent's Old Fort project funds so the reconstruction could be finished in the Bicentennial year.

"I think we should finish up the access road as soon as possible," Evans said.

Funds for the land acquisition, parking lot, access road, etc. can be added to the Interior Appropriations Bill for fiscal 1978 without further authorizing legislation. Evans is fourth ranking member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, which has direct power over the funds for the project. □