



MYTH BUSTERS:

Dispelling Common Myths about Public Transit

MYTH #1

Public transit is only needed in urban areas.

FACT – According to the New Mexico Department of Transportation’s Transit and Rail Division, there were 1.6 million trips made on public transit in fiscal year 2017 throughout rural New Mexico. Rural New Mexicans, just as those living in urban areas, need access to reliable public transit. Some rely upon public transit for need-based transit (i.e. medical appointments, disabilities, and financial need); others rely upon transportation to reduce

their reliance on vehicles and reduce their carbon footprint. Not only does public transit provide vital services to those in need, but it also helps those who are committed to reducing carbon dioxide and saving vehicle miles. Because of public transit, 96.9 million vehicle miles were saved throughout the state, which eliminated 46,333 tons of carbon dioxide in fiscal year 2017.

FACT – In New Mexico, public transit needs funding to improve routes and provide more access to people in both rural and urban areas of the state. Public transit is strained, because the state of New Mexico’s budget provides no money from the general fund to support locally provided public bus transit services. Additionally, federal funds are diminishing and/or not keeping up with cost of public transit.

There is currently inadequate funding to provide the transportation needs of New Mexicans; however, there are many methods that could infuse New Mexico’s public transit system with the money needed to provide vital transit to people throughout

the state. Other states have successfully raised the gasoline tax, taxes on motor vehicle registration and rental vehicle fees to supplement public transit.

In New Mexico, there are several options for funding to improve public transit, including the state general fund, State and local gas taxes, bond proceeds, registration/license/title fees, gross receipts tax, state transportation funds, motor vehicle/rental car gross receipts tax, weight and distance fees, and miscellaneous revenues, such as fees and other types of assessments.

MYTH #2

There is plenty of funding available for public transit.

MYTH #3

Public transit isn’t necessary.

FACT – Surveys of public transit providers demonstrate that, out of the 14.5 million public transit trips made in fiscal year 2017, the largest users of public transit are people getting to work. A 2016 user survey by the North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD)—a regional transportation service that transports people from rural and urban areas to communities in Santa Fe, Taos, Los Alamos, and Rio Arriba Counties—found that 49% of people use the blue buses to get to work. Twenty six percent (26%) use the buses for shopping for necessities and 23% for medical appointments.

NM Department of Transportation (DOT) Park and Ride, which operates mostly in northern New Mexico with some service in southern New Mexico,

transports people to and from work. A recent survey done for the Santa Fe Metropolitan Planning Group said the biggest users of public transit in Santa Fe are those getting to and from work. In addition, Santa Fe also has a large student ridership of approximately 25%. Two other key factors of public transit use are income and lack of car ownership. The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) survey found that 61% of its users earned less than \$17,000 a year and more than 56% did not own a car.

Thus, public transit is vital to a thriving economy, in which more people are able to get to and from work, increasing the number of taxpayers and decreasing unemployment.

For more information, visit www.nm-ta.com

FACT – Public transit not only helps those with disabilities, medical conditions, and financial need, but it also reduces roadway related costs by millions per year. With the implementation of accessible public transit, the number of cars on the road are reduced, and this helps to alleviate the need to continually increase the capacity of highways and roads and associated wear and tear, thus saving local, state and federal funds used to build more lanes and maintain existing roadways. Additionally, public transit can serve to provide an alternate option aside from getting behind the wheel when intoxicated, cutting down on DWIs and improving road safety.

MYTH #4
Public transit only helps a small segment of the population.

MYTH #5
Public transit refers only to buses.

FACT – Public transit in New Mexico encompasses transit operations such as fixed route buses, commuter buses, door-to-door small bus service, complementary van service for disabled residents, seniors, social and human services transportation, and many other key mobility services necessary for daily life line needs.

Those in poverty benefit from public transportation, but the demographics served by public transit in New Mexico are far more extensive. Those with

medical issues preventing them from safely driving, those with disabilities, the elderly, and those with a desire to get to and from work, shopping or errands with more ease and reliability rely upon public transit daily. Students and workers also comprise a large majority of the state’s transportation users. Additionally, with improved funding, public transit services could expand their weekday and weekend hours, clearing up roads and increasing public safety. Many public transit systems offer free Internet service so people can work while riding.



FACT – Public transit is a bipartisan issue, focused on supporting the economy and the livelihoods of New Mexicans to whom transit is not only an option for travel, but is the only option to get to and from work. As public transit is the only option for many workers across the state of New Mexico, it is a vital element of ensuring New Mexicans have jobs and can contribute back to the state’s economy. Additionally, it is not a political issue, but an issue of ensuring

senior citizens have mobility, those with medical needs have access to their doctors, and those with disabilities have the option to get to work, school, medical appointments or their daily errands. Public transit also ensures veterans have a reliable source of transportation to get to and from medical appointments, to run errands and get to needed services. For many, public transit is not simply one of many options for travel; it is their only option.

MYTH #6
Public transit is a partisan issue.

