NMTA
Summer 2021 Newsletter

News from the NM Transit Association President

Dear NMTA Members,

Well, it has definitely been a summer of change in New Mexico. We have seen the re-emergence of transit in our state. Systems are running at higher capacities and have seen an increase in ridership.

Riders are able to go places that were previously closed, and choices are getting better every week.

Just as life began to get back to a new normal, new variants of Covid-19 surface. It is like a pesky fly that refuses to leave you alone. However, we are dealing with it and moving on. Our bus systems are working diligently to keep buses on the road in a way that minimizes the danger to, not only the riders, but the drivers themselves.

During the week of July 19th the Southwest Transit Association's (SWTA) Summer University was held in Santa Fe. Attendance was excellent, and the curriculum was outstanding. Kudos to Rich Sampson, Executive Director of SWTA, SWTA staff and all the volunteers that helped this event flow smoothly.

NMTA is currently working on coordinating quarterly training sessions and conferences. At this times topics include:

- Active Shooter/Violence in the Work Place
- Security and Terrorism Awareness Training
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Succession Planning
- Effective Leadership
- Procurement

If your agency has any training needs or training suggestions, please contact Melissa Drake at mdrake@nm-ta.com or (505) 796-8377.

More information on NMTA Quarterly Training Sessions and NM Transit Conferences will be shared as available.

Thank you so much for being the best part of transit in New Mexico!

Sincerely,

Joseph E. Hardin
NMTA President

Inside this Issue:

News from NMTA	1
News from NMDOT	2
Highlighting A New Mexico Transit Member	4
North Central RTD	6
Rio Metro RTD	8
South Central RTD	9
Upcoming Events	10
NMTA Board of Directors	11

NEW MEXICO TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

More From NMTA...

Please check nm-ta.com regularly for upcoming news, upcoming legislative agendas, events in transit and more.

The Myth Busters Brochure is also available for your review and use at the nm-ta.com website .

Follow us on Social Media:
Facebook @New Mexico Transit Association
Twitter @NM_Transit

News from New Mexico Department of Transportation

News From NM Department of Transportation

Updated NMDOT COVID Response Guidance

On August 20, NMDOT Transit and Rail updated its COVID response guidance for operators of public transportation. The updated guidance is available at the following link:

https://dot.state.nm.us/content/dam/nmdot/Transit_Rail/NM%20COVID19%20Transit%20Response%20Guidance.pdf

Updated State of New Mexico Mask Usage Requirements

Effective August 20, all individuals in New Mexico aged 2 years or older are required to wear masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status, except when eating or drinking. The current New Mexico Department of Health Public Health Order is available at this link:

https://cv.nmhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/081721-PHO-Masks.pdf

Federal Law Requiring Mask Usage

Effective February 1, 2021, all passengers and drivers (with limited exceptions) are required to wear properly-worn face masks on public transportation. This requirement has been extended through January 18, 2022. More information is available at the following links.

USDOT FAQs on Mask Mandate https://www.transportation.gov/safety/mask-travel-guidance#FTA

Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/21/executive-order-promoting-covid-19-safety-in-domestic-and-international-travel/

Centers for Disease Control Order: Requirements for Persons to Wear Masks While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC_GMTF_01-29-21-p.pdf

Transportation Security Administration COVID -19 Hub https://www.tsa.gov/coronavirus

The NM COVID-19 Transit Response Guidance has also been updated to reflect this change, and is available at this link: https://dot.state.nm.us/content/dam/nmdot/Transit_Rail/NM%20COVID19%20Transit%20Response%20Guidance.pdf

Other useful links include:

FTA Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 and CARES Act https://www.transit.dot.gov/frequently-asked-questions-fta-grantees-regarding-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19#CARES

Centers for Disease Control – What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID -19 https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html

Environmental Protection Agency - List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

Sections 5310 and 5311 Program Site Visits

In August, NMDOT staff resumed in-person site visits for the Section 5310 and 5311 programs. More site visits are scheduled for October. Thank you to everyone for uploading your documents for review ahead of your planned visit and for responding promptly to address any findings.

Law Enforcement Day at the New Mexico State Fair

NMDOT Transit and Rail represented public transit for Law Enforcement Day at the NM State Fair on September 9, 2021. Thank you to those agencies who donated items to be given out at the event.

Transit Bureau contact list

Kevin Olinger
(505) 469-3595
Kevin.Olinger@state.nm.us

Deborah Bach
(505) 819-9112
Deborah.Bach@state.nm.us

Gabrielle Chavez
(505) 469-4413
Gabrielle.Chavez@state.nm.us

Alexis Corning-Padilla
(505) 699-4384
AlexisCorning.Padil@state.nm.us

Jason Park
(505) 490-5347
Jason.Park@state.nm.us

Vijay Ummadi
(505) 469-7890
VijayK.Ummadi@state.nm.us

New Mexico DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MOBILITY FOR EVERYONE

Highlighting New Mexico Transit Members

Hobbs Express

And New Mexico Rail Runner Express

Congratulations on 30 Years With Transit Jacque Pennington!!!

The City of Hobbs and Hobbs Express would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Jacque Pennington on 30 years of dedicated service to the Hobbs Express. Jacque started with the City as a driver on September 23, 1991, when there were only two employees and one van. Throughout her career, Jacque has driven buses, scheduled rides, been a dispatcher and trainer. Today, she oversees the day-to-day operations and management of the Federal grant while coordinating bus routes and supervising a total of 12 employees. Jacque has spearheaded growth and change to the department and is a great advocate for public transit. Hard work, loyalty and diligence are the cornerstones of great employees, and Jacque has all of these qualities. This organization would not be the same without her leadership and guidance. Thank you to Jacque Pennington and congratulations on reaching this 30-year milestone in her professional career!

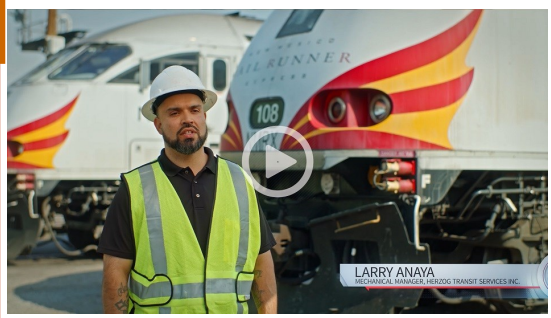
New Mexico Rail Runner Express Celebrates 15 Years of Service

Fifteen years ago on July 14, 2006, the New Mexico Rail Runner Express opened its doors to passengers. In July 2021, Rio Metro commemorated this milestone anniversary online, in print, and in person.

Social Media

Leading up to the anniversary, Rio Metro posted 15 “Fun Facts” about the Rail Runner to our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter channels. The most popular of these was Fun Fact #6: 60: Number of buses connecting to the train between Taos and Socorro, which reached more than 18,000 people and had more than 300 comments, reactions, and shares. View links to all of our social media accounts at riometro.org/79/Social-Networking.

Video Vignettes



Video vignettes were created to showcase the experiences of our riders, staff, and community partners. A video montage included some of the fun memorabilia and promotional items from the past 15 years. These can be found on the Rail Anniversary web page, social media, and the NM Rail Runner Express YouTube Channel.

Express Magazine – Anniversary Edition

A 15 Year Anniversary Edition of Express, the official magazine of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express, was published in early July. This collectible publication includes messages from the executives, a timeline, photo collages, a history of the Rail Runner, and more. Visit riometro.org/301/Express-Magazine to read it online.

Anniversary Webpage

A Rail Anniversary webpage consolidated all of these unique items in one location. Find it at riometro.org/449/Rail-Anniversary.

Press Conference

Finally, fifteen years later on the exact anniversary date, a press conference was held at the Los Ranchos / Journal Center Rail Runner Station. Speakers included current staff and board members. Those in attendance received a commemorative poster and anniversary pin. Trax, the Rail Runner mascot, was on hand to greet everyone and pose for pictures.

Share Your Story!!!

It is always so exciting to hear what transit is doing throughout New Mexico. NMTA is working diligently to highlight our New Mexico agencies through the NMTA Quarterly Newsletter, Social Media, and Op-eds.

As you all know, transit does so much in each of our communities. The goal of NMTA is to let New Mexico residents and government know what all transit does in our state. The more stories you share with us, the more information we have to do this.

Articles can be to highlight that special staff member who always goes above and beyond to ensure quality service, stories from our passengers sharing their stories of the importance of transit in their lives, or what your agency is doing in your community to assist with community activities/events.

Email your story to Melissa Drake at mdrake@nm-ta.com today!

News from

North Central Regional Transit District

NCRTD To Resume Service on its 290 Edgewood Route

The North Central Regional Transit District has resumed regular route and scheduled service on the 290 Edgewood route. The route had been temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 290 Edgewood route provides weekday fare-free commuter bus service operated by a rider/driver from Edgewood, Moriarty, Stanley and Galisteo to points throughout the City of Santa Fe including Downtown, the State Capitol, South Capitol Transit Center, St. Vincent's Hospital and key government facilities throughout the City.

NCRTD Receives $5 Million Grant for Electric Buses and Infrastructure for Taos Area

NCRTD will receive $5 million from US Department of Transportation (USDOT)/ Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as part of its low or no emissions grants program to improve service and air quality.

The money will go towards the purchase of five electric buses and charging infrastructure that will be placed in the Taos area. It will also provide for support charging equipment and workforce training to maintain the vehicles.

The District is very excited to be among the recipients of this USDOT/FTA grant to expand low or no emissions buses and facilities. The NCRTD will receive the funds through the New Mexico Department of Transportation. We look forward to be contributing to a cleaner environment and a greener New Mexico.

This follows an earlier $2.9 million FTA grant the NCRTD received for the purchase of five electric buses, charging infrastructure and workforce training targeted for the Española area.

The electric buses will be placed in and around the Town of Taos and City of Española because of the limited driving range of the vehicles. Future plans call for expanding the purchase of charging stations that can be placed along longer routes.

NCRTD Collaborating with Los Alamos National Lab and New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) on a Transit Service Options Needs Analysis

The North Central Regional Transit District is currently working with NMDOT and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) on a transit needs and options analysis as the Lab anticipates a significant increase in staffing over the coming years.

The study was initiated by LANL and NCRTD, in collaboration with NMDOT, which have retained Nelson/Nygaard to conduct a LANL Transit Service Options Analysis that includes an analysis of Existing Transit Service Options as well as a Mobility Options Analysis.

Currently 60% (~6,000) of LANL employees commute from outside of Los Alamos County. The LANL Transit Service Options Analysis is designed to identify changes to existing services and identify new services and programs to increase the number of employees who use public transit alternatives to driving alone to commute to the Laboratory.

The Mobility Options Analysis highlights potential projects to increase the use of alternative modes of transportation by LANL employees. These projects target all aspects of mobility, including getting to LANL and within LANL.

Giving employees multiple options for how to travel to work allows them flexibility and freedom. While not only enhancing the experience and practicality of taking public transportation to the Lab, for those who continue to drive alone, these projects can improve their commute by decreasing congestion and demands on current parking onsite. Transforming mobility at LANL can have a myriad of positive effects for current employees and the region.

It is anticipated that the Study will be completed by September 2021.

News from

Rio Metro Regional Transit District

Operation Safe Driver Week

Operation Safe Driver Week took place nationally in July. Rio Metro held a week-long educational blitz from July 12-16, 2021 spotlighting unsafe driving behaviors by both commercial motor vehicle drivers and non-commercial drivers in an effort to combat the number of injuries and fatalities resulting from vehicle collisions. This year's campaign was focused on safe driving around railroad tracks, as the date also coincided with the New Mexico Rail Runner Express 15 year anniversary.

For the campaign, an educational video created for the public articulating the steps that our bus operators must following when approaching and crossing train tracks. The accompanied web page included the video, driving safety tips for all drivers, and links to local and national safe driving resources. Finally, the tips and video were shared across Rio Metro's social media channels.

Watch Rio Metro's Safe Driving Behaviors for Bus Operators video online at youtube.com/user/NMRailRunnerExpress.

New Facility to House Rio Metro Bus Operations in Valencia County

Design is well underway for the Valencia County Transit Facility, the soon-to-be home of Rio Metro's bus services in the county. Rio Metro has been hard at work with the Village of Los Lunas and consultants Bohannan-Huston and Studio Southwest Architects to design an inviting and energy-efficient facility for our staff, drivers and the public near the intersection of NM 6 and NM 47.

The centerpiece of the VCTF will be an 8,000-square foot office building styled after the metal-roofed agricultural buildings found up and down NM 47. The building will house the dispatchers and supervisors who coordinate rides, and will also provide Rio Metro's drivers with the locker, exercise, and break rooms that can make a hectic day a bit easier to manage.

Visit the Ride Rio Metro blog at riometro.org/440/Blog to learn more.

South Central RTD (SCRTD) Year in Review

The past year was challenging due in part to the adverse effects of the pandemic on travel and a year of service expansion and facility renovations. The district met the pandemic challenges by instituting changes to address safety on board the buses by adding driver shields (made in-house), putting sanitation dispensers on the buses, suspending fares, and sanitizing the buses after every bus trip. These steps contributed to the district maintaining service levels.

With schools closed, the district reduced school bus service, but maintained all other services while moving forward on adding new bus routes including a new transit corridor connecting the southern area of Doña Ana County to El Paso's downtown. Additionally, bus shelters and benches were installed improving passenger comfort at high boarding locations.

These added services and amenities attracted new riders to the bus system. Actually, bus service and ridership have increased every year since the district began service in 2016. Moreover, during the past year, the South Central RTD increased ridership by 54 percent through the addition of the new transit corridor between Sunland Park and downtown El Paso.

The District completed phase two of renovations to the Anthony Operations and Maintenance Facility. Phase I was the replacement of the HVAC system and phase II was renovation of the parking lot, resurfacing the limited concrete base and pouring concrete over the dirt area that was used for parking previously. Phase III in the next year will raise the roof of the facility to fully transition the maintenance garage from an automotive shop to a more standard transit maintenance facility.

These changes are a significant improvement for our drivers and maintenance team.

In the new year, the district plans to initiate a new regional pilot vanpool program that will operate from Las Cruces to the Santa Teresa Industrial Park.

This ridesharing initiative will be a first step to adding new bus routes in this corridor. Over 100 employers are located in the Santa Teresa Industrial Park with work shifts that are seven days a week and up to 24 hours a day. Of course, most are morning or evening, but the schedules vary enough to make forming carpools or vanpools difficult. So that will be the challenge.

The Border Industrial Association (BIA) will serve as a partner to link the 100 plus employers and thousands of employees in Santa Teresa to the new commuter service. The pilot will establish two vanpools from Las Cruces traveling to Santa Teresa with a stop in Anthony. More vanpools will be initiated following the pilot program.

Dona Ana County Food Bank, through Loaves and Fishes, a non-profit provides over 300 seniors located in Sierra County with enough food for two months. Unfortunately, their services were stopped during the beginning of the pandemic because the seniors could not transport and distribute the food boxes to Seniors. The NMDOT asked South Central RTD to support the initiative. The District has been providing service since April 2020.

Continued from page 9

Going forward, the district is posed to expand service even further. A new strategic initiative will be implemented in the next year that follows the recent Board approved Ten Year plan. The Ten Year Plan looks at regional goals and objectives for public transit, route designs, local and regional funding sources, performance measures and targets, levels of service, and which areas should be served by transit. Further, "the plan phases in new transit services to unserved areas in Doña Ana and Sierra Counties and improved service frequency for current services, which is critical to sustaining growth." said David Armijo, Executive Director for South Central RTD.

Finally, the opportunity to secure new federal capital funding from the El Paso and southern New Mexico region will provide much needed funding to enhance service operations and to maintain and expand the bus fleet and transit service network.

Save the Date!!!

Upcoming NMTA Quarterly Training Sessions and Transit Conferences…

Transportation Research Board (TRB)
Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation TRB Virtual Event
October 25—27, 2021
For more information or to register, visit: https://trb.secure-platform.com/a/page/ruralbus

American Public Transportation Association (APTA)
APTA TRANSform Conference and Expo 2021
November 7—10, 2021
Orlando, FL
For more information or to register, visit: www.apta.com/conferences-events/

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)
CTAA Delivering Essential Innovation-The Premier Annual Training and Networking Event and Expo 2021, Richmond, VA
November 7—11, 2021
For more information or to register, visit: www.ctaa.org/expo-2021-home/

South West Transit Association (SWTA)
SWTA and Texas Transit Association 2022 Joint Annual Conference, Austin, TX
February 22—26, 2022
For more information, visit: www.swta.org/news_events/details/swta-tta-2021-joint-annual-conference

NM Transit Conferences and Training Sessions
More information coming soon...

NMTA Board of Directors Contact Information

Executive Board of Directors

Joseph Hardin, President
Director Representing Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals With Disabilities
Z-Trans/Zia Therapy
Contact Info:
Office: (575) 439-4900 ext. 152
Email: ztrans@ziatherapy.org

Elizabeth Carter, Vice President
Director At Large
Rio Metro Regional Transit District
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 843-1712
Email: ECarter@mrcog-nm.gov

Ed Powers, Treasurer
Director At Large
All Aboard America!
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 428-6316
Email: EPowers@allaboardamerica.com

Christy Ladd, Secretary
Director Representing Tribal Transit
PoPay Messenger - Ohkay Owingeh
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 852-4400
Email: christy.ladd@ohkay.org

Ex-Officio Director

David Harris
Transit and Rail Division Director, NMDOT
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 827-5420
Email: davidc.harris@state.nm.us

Directors

James Barela
Director At Large
Atomic City Transit - Los Alamos County
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 661-7433
Email: james.barela@lacnm.us

Michael Bartholomew
Director Representing Urban Transit Systems
RoadRunner Transit - City of Las Cruces
Contact Info:
Office: (575) 541-2500
Email: mbartholomew@las-cruces.org

Mary Collins
Director Representing Rural Transit Providers
Clovis Area Transit System - City of Clovis
Contact Info:
Office: (575) 769-7910
Email: mcollins@cityofclovis.org

Gary Guinn
Business Director
Creative Bus Sales
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 328-8510
Email: GaryG@creativebussales.com

Thomas S. Marking
Representing Professional Member
AARP
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 946-3603
Email: tom.marking@wans.net

Anthony Mortillaro
Director Representing Regional Transit District
North Central Regional Transit Districts
Contact Info:
Office: (505) 629-4713
Email: anthonym@ncrtd.org