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**News from the NM Transit Association President**



Dear NMTA Members,  
I want to first thank Joe Hardin for his years of service on the NMTA Board, and he will be greatly missed. I am humbled being elected by my fellow Board

Members to serve as your President for the next year. I also want to recognize James Barela being elected Vice-President, Ed Powers being re-elected Treasure and Becky Hicks being re-elected Secretary. The Board would also like to welcome our newest Tribal Transit Member, Todd Naktewa with A:shiwí Transit on the Pueblo of Zuni. There is currently a vacant Section 5310 Board position available, and I encourage members from organizations receiving Section 5310 funds to reach out to Melissa Drake if you are interested in serving on the NMTA Board. I look forward to working with the Board to continue to provide training that meets the needs of our members and working with NMTA's Legislative Subcommittee and its lobbyist to get the State Transit Fund and Yield to Bus legislation passed.

I would like to thank NMTA's Legislative Subcommittee and Lobbyist J.D. Bullington for their efforts and hard work during the 2023 Legislative Session. NMTA's State Transit Fund (SB 55, sponsored by Pete Campos) successfully passed the Senate Tax, Business and Transportation Committee and advanced to the Senate Finance Committee with no action taken. NMTA's Yield to Bus (SB 249, sponsored by Roberto "Bobby" J. Gonzales) successfully passed the Senate Tax, Business and Transportation Committee and advanced to the Senate Judiciary Committee with no action taken. As of April 2023, NMTA's Legislative Subcommittee has been meeting to develop a strategic plan in preparation of the 2024 Legislative session to try and get these bills passed.

I would like to encourage members to volunteer to serve on NMTA's Subcommittees which can be found at <https://nm-ta.com/subcommittees/>. If interested, please send an email to Melissa Drake at NMTA ([mdrake@nm-ta.com](mailto:mdrake@nm-ta.com)).

The NMTA Board thanks Melissa for her hard work on making this year's Managers' Leadership Conference, Bus Road-eo, Conference and Expo a great success. This year's bus road-eo was a first being held indoors, and we learned a lot from it. I want to thank all judges and participants for participating, and NMTA appreciated the honest feedback of all the judges and participants on the indoor course. A shout out to Ed for being the announcer and having a great assortment of music. Melissa has proactively started looking at venues for the 2024 Management Conference, Bus Road-eo, Conference and Expo based upon the feedback received by participants, presenters, and vendors.



The NMTA is currently working on its training plan for FY2024 along with NMDOT. If you would like to see training on a topic you consider important, please email Melissa Drake at ([mdrake@nm-ta.com](mailto:mdrake@nm-ta.com)). We appreciate ideas from all of you.

Again, the NMTA Board would like to thank all its members for the services you provide to your communities.

Have a happy and safe summer,

Liz

**We NEED you.  
Can you HELP?**



## News from New Mexico Department of Transportation

### News From NM Department of Transportation

#### URGENT: 5311 Subrecipient Invoicing

**Please make sure your monthly billing is current.** Until the debt ceiling issue is resolved at the national level, there is a chance that the Federal government will eventually need to

temporarily suspend reimbursements to states, which could impact our ability to reimburse our subrecipients as quickly as we normally do.

#### NMDOT Statewide Public Transportation Study Update

NMDOT and its contractor, Nelson Nygaard, continue to make progress with the Statewide Public Transportation Study. The Regional Meetings were held in Santa Fe, Gallup, Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Roswell during the month of April and engaged in valuable dialogue with providers and the MPOs. The survey ended on April 30, 2023, and as of May 2, 2023, 573+ online surveys were submitted. We will begin tabulating the paper

surveys received, and the results of the survey will be included in a State of the System report to be released in early summer 2023. This will be followed by draft recommendations and a prioritized list of programs and investments report.

Please go to [www.connectnmstudy.com](http://www.connectnmstudy.com) for more information regarding NMDOT's study and project timeline.

#### Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans

NMDOT will be starting the updates to the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Regional Plans (CPHSTP) this spring. The seven regional CPHSTP's were last updated in 2019, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires that the plans are updated and submitted to FTA every four years.

The Coordinated Public Transit Human Service Transportation plans will identify the transportation needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, households without vehicles, and persons living below the poverty line and will include strategies for meeting the needs of these disadvantaged

population groups and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation to address these needs. The seven plan updates will be conducted at the RTPO regional level, and data for the MPOs will be integrated into the RTPO descriptions; Final plans will be submitted to FTA in September 2023.

The current plans can be found at the following link: <https://www.dot.nm.gov/planning-research-multimodal-and-safety/modal/transit-rail/transit-bureau/>

## Transit Bureau contact list – please note new email addresses

Kevin Olinger  
(505) 469-3595  
Kevin.Olinger@dot.nm.gov

Deborah Bach  
(505) 819-9112  
Deborah.Bach@dot.nm.gov

Gabrielle Chavez  
(505) 469-4413  
Gabrielle.Chavez@dot.nm.gov

Alexis Corning-Padilla  
(505) 699-4384  
AlexisCorning.Padil@dot.nm.gov

Jason Park  
(505) 490-5347  
Jason.Park@dot.nm.gov

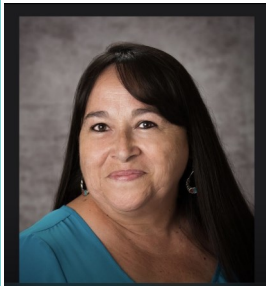
Vijay Ummadi  
(505) 469-7890  
VijayK.Ummadi@dot.nm.gov

Jason Lujan  
(505) 487-0177  
Jason.Lujan2@dot.nm.gov



### MARY LOU KEMP'S JOURNEY TO RETIREMENT

Written by Mary Collins, Clovis Area Transit



On June 25th, 1990, Mary Lou started her journey working for the City of Clovis. She was hired as the Older Adults Program Director. She was very excited to start her new career working with senior adults in the Clovis community. Shortly after beginning her new career as the Older Adults Program Director, she began to hear about C.A.T.S. Not knowing what C.A.T.S. was, she asked about the acronym. At that time, she found out that C.A.T.S. was for Clovis Area Transit System and that she would be responsible for both the Senior Adults and C.A.T.S. departments.

Once she learned of her extra duties, she began to diligently work on effectively running

both the transit system and older adult's department. Due to Mary Lou's hard work and dedication, she had both departments rocking and rolling with each other. She not only directed the two departments but made numerous enhancements and improvements.

She also started revamping the fleet of vehicles for C.A.T.S. by adding signage on the vehicles to inform the public that this is a system for everyone to use. In doing so, the transit system quickly increased their ridership to 25,503. This also promoted growth in the older adults program.

Under the direction of Mary Lou, the transit system quickly increased their ridership to 25,503 and the older adults increased their attendance at the center and other functions. By 1991, the ridership for C.A.T.S. had increased — to approximately 54,000 riders annually.

Highlighting  
New  
Mexico  
Transit  
Members

City of  
Clovis —



Clovis  
Area  
Transit  
System

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**Highlighting  
New  
Mexico  
Transit  
Members**

In 1998, the City of Clovis decided to separate the Older Adults Department and C.A.T.S. When the City of Clovis decided to separate the two departments, Mary Lou was faced with the decision of staying with the Older Adults Department or start as the first Transit Director of C.A.T.S. It took her awhile to decide, since working with seniors was a lifelong career goal for Mary Lou, but in the end, she did decide to move with C.A.T.S. and has been with C.A.T.S. for the past 33 years.

Due to Mary Lou's passion to serve the community of Clovis better and the growth of transit, she saw a larger transit facility was needed. In 1998, C.A.T.S. applied for a grant through the Community Transportation Association of America and the grant was awarded for a new transit facility. While the new transit facility was being designed and built, the C.A.T.S. family had a few temporary moves. The first was in 1998 to 201 E. 21st St. The next was in 2002 into an old maintenance facility at 500 Sycamore. We shared the Sycamore location with the Parks & Recreations staff. We soon became very good friends and co-workers with the Parks and Rec staff. We remained at this location until our new facility was completed in 2008.



In 2000, a new transit program was implemented by the federal government called "Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)". This gave us an opportunity to expand our workforce and work hours. The program was very successful and helped a lot of people improve their status. The JARC allowed us to obtain and maintain staff and allowed us to extend hours of operation until 9:00 p.m.

C.A.T.S. applied for another grant to study the future of transportation service in the City of Clovis. The grant was awarded and Mary Lou and Mary Collins, along with an independent contractor with the Federal Transit Association, put together a fixed route for the City of Clovis. Unfortunately the fixed route plan was tabled in 2008.

Mary Lou knew she would need more staff assistance as everything was growing and going so fast, so she made budget provisions that allowed us to hire an Executive Assistant. At this time, Mitzi Barrows joined our team. Mitzi was a great source of help in keeping us moving forward with our plans to grow C.A.T.S. Shortly after Mitzi joined us, our new transit facility was ready for use.

During all this transition, Mary Lou never lost sight of how awesome her staff was. She made sure they were always included in everything. The longest running endearment was making the provision to allow all her drivers to participate in the Annual NM Transit Bus Rodeo that started in 1989. C.A.T.S. has had bus operators participate every year since 1991. Over the years, we also managed to bring home a few 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place awards.

After securing a nice fleet of vehicles, Mary Lou applied for more funding to get the second phase of our facility completed to include a bus shed and storage building. With all the improvements and enhancements, our ridership skyrocketed to almost 70,000 trips a year. It was really growing until COVID-19 hit and the world came to a halt for everyone but the C.A.T.S. team. Mary Lou made it possible for us to keep working through all the closures of businesses, schools, and life in general. She provided us with necessary equipment to keep us safe, and she also gave us the choice to work in the office or to stay at home. We are a dedicated group, and we support our director to a fault.

Mary Lou ensured a functional structure and work environment by always being extremely fair to everyone. She also kept everything in order and expected each of us to do the same.

Continued from page 4

She was never “above” any task to be done and would assist you in completing anything that needed to be completed and would explain it to make sure the task was fully understood.

After 33 years of dedicated service, Mary Lou has come full circle, and it is time to embrace her future with her family and grandchildren. She can now fully enjoy her freedom of retirement and enjoy time with her loved ones. She may be leaving our department but will never be out of our lives; we are forever joined. We will miss her and her passion to lead the growth of transit in Clovis. Mary Collins has been working with Mary Lou for all 33 years and said, “It is going to be very difficult for me to not see her at work anymore. We have put in a lot of hours together over the years.”

It will be a big void in our department as well as in our lives. It has been a long time coming, and I guess that the time to retire is here. The C.A.T.S. family want to extend our heartfelt love and admiration to you for allowing us to be a part of your life, and we will treasure your friendship now and always. Good Luck with all your free time, and you can stop in and visit us anytime. This is not a goodbye, we will just say stay blessed until we meet again.

Happy Retirement from your C.A.T.S. crew!

## Connecting Communities Across Northern New Mexico

The North Central Regional Transit District (the District) is expected to launch a new microtransit service in the Pojoaque-Nambe, Espanola, and Taos areas. The service, called MyBlue, will help riders connect to essential services outside of a fixed-route schedule.

MyBlue is an on-demand, pilot program demonstrating the feasibility of transportation in rural and small communities across Northern New Mexico. The service was developed to help riders connect to areas outside of a fixed-route schedule, allowing for more flexibility and ease while using public transportation.

Bryce Gibson, Planning and Projects manager for the District shared his enthusiasm for the project, “We are so excited to officially launch microtransit service for North Central New Mexico. MyBlue represents a significant leap forward for community members, and will provide flexibility and personalized travel.” Currently, MyBlue is in its beta testing stage, and the District is receiving valuable feedback before the service is launched to the public. An official launch date will be announced later this year.

MyBlue differentiates itself from traditional

on-demand transit services through a smartphone app developed in collaboration with Liftango, who has helped launch several other microtransit systems. The District believes this collaboration will lead to the success of microtransit service in New Mexico. “Liftango has been an incredible partner to work with. We look forward to the future of this partnership to provide excellent service in current service zones and to expand service to new communities,” Gibson states.

The MyBlue app allows passengers to book rides directly through the app, track their ride in real time, and pay for services with a credit, debit, or prepaid card. A smartphone is not required to book a ride through MyBlue; however, other features will not be accessible. Rides will be \$1 from point of origin to destination and is free for ADA qualified riders.



News from

**NORTH  
CENTRAL  
RTD**

**North  
Central  
Regional  
Transit  
District**



## Senator Leo Jaramillo Demonstrates Day to Day Use Of Public Transportation



Senator Leo Jaramillo, District 5, demonstrated how useful public transportation is for day-to-day living. The Senator took the Blue Bus from Espanola to the Roundhouse in Santa Fe for a legislative session on March 7, 2023.

Beginning his day early in the morning, Senator Leo Jaramillo walked from his home in Espanola to the Espanola Transit Center and boarded the 200 Blue Bus to Santa Fe. As an active member in the community, Jaramillo made sure his trip was documented via Facebook live so locals could be a part of the experience. As he walked the few miles to his first stop, many supporters stopped by to say "hi" or express their excitement that the Blue Bus was being used by Jaramillo. The Blue Bus is an important resource for several northern New Mexicans living in small and rural communities, as it connects riders to places such as grocery stores, doctor's offices, and other essential services. Jaramillo expressed his support for public transportation and the desire to see it used for commuter purposes and day-to-day living. The Blue Bus believes that public transportation is a valuable resource for all community members across the counties serviced and is continuing to develop the service to meet the needs of riders.

Being a strong pillar in the community, Senator Jaramillo didn't miss a chance to connect with the northern New Mexico community. While on board the Blue Bus to Santa Fe, the senator made jovial conversation with other passengers and listened compassionately to what is meaningful to the community. As New Mexican landscape rolled in the background, sustainability and environmental wellness was a value all passengers on board could agree on.

The Blue Bus has recognized the landscape as one of many beautiful things in New Mexico and is therefore taking strong initiatives on sustainability. Projected plans will allow for new electric buses to become part of the Blue Bus fleet. This plan was met with enthusiasm from the Senator due to a shared appreciation of nature and intent to support the environment.

Senator Jaramillo transferred buses at the Sheridan Transit Center in Santa Fe and hopped on the NMDOT Orange Route. The ride concluded at the NMDOT parking lot on the east side of the Roundhouse. The full experience took approximately 2 hours, from walking to the initial stop to entering the Roundhouse building. The trip was a successful example that public transportation is a useful and needed service for commuting and daily living. In the future, Senator Jaramillo hopes to make additional trips to the Capitol on the Blue Bus and encourages more people to use this fare-free service.



## Proposed Rail Runner Schedule Posted for Comment



Rio Metro Regional Transit District is proposing changes to the current New Mexico Rail Runner Express schedule. Rio Metro is requesting that area transit

providers and the public review the schedule and provide feedback no later than June 2, 2023. Review the schedule at [www.riometro.org/proposedschedule](http://www.riometro.org/proposedschedule) and submit comments to RMRTD Director Robert Gonzales by email at [rgonzales@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:rgonzales@mrcog-nm.gov).

## New Women in Transportation Series

Rio Metro kicked-off a new Women in Transportation profile series in April highlighting the important contributions women are making within the industry and capturing their stories. The first person featured in the series is Conni Vigil, Rio Metro's Director of Finance and Administration. In her profile, Vigil discusses what attracted her to pursue a career in transportation, the contributions of public transit to the community, and her love of sharing knowledge with people entering the

field. Read more at [www.riometro.org/womenintransportation](http://www.riometro.org/womenintransportation) and check back monthly for a new posts.



## Miss Indian World on the Rail Runner



New Mexico Rail Runner Express passengers and crew members were treated to a visit by a special guest in April. Reigning 2022-2023 Miss Indian World Tashina Red Hawk rode the train on the morning of April 25, visiting with people on board and at the Downtown

Albuquerque and Sandoval County / US 550 stations. Ms. Red Hawk, who is from South Dakota and an enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate, was in town as part of the Annual Gathering of Nations Pow Wow. This marks the fifth time a reigning Miss Indian World has ridden the Rail Runner as part of an ongoing collaboration with Gathering of Nations. View pictures from this year's train ride at [flickr.com/photos/riometro/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/riometro/).

## Rail Runner Mascot Gearing Up for a Season of Sporting Events

Trax, the New Mexico Rail Runner mascot, is gearing up for a busy summer season! In partnership with New Mexico United and the Albuquerque Isotopes, Trax is making a total of eight appearances at soccer and baseball games at the Rio Grande Credit Union Field in Albuquerque. His first appearance at an Isotopes game occurred on April 21, which was Rail Runner Marquee Night. He greeted fans on the concourse before making his way to the field to cheer on Rio Metro staff

member Grant Brodehl, who threw out the first pitch. The evening ended with a post-game fireworks show, sponsored by the Rail Runner and Rio Metro. Find a calendar of all upcoming Trax appearances at [www.riometro.org/trax](http://www.riometro.org/trax).



## News from



## Rio Metro Regional Transit District

## News from



## South Central Regional Transit District

### South Central Regional Transit District named Transit Agency of the Year



Pictured from left to right: NMDOT Cabinet Secretary Ricky Serna, David Armijo (SCRTD Executive Director), David Harris (Transit and Rail Division Director)

The South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) has received the State of New Mexico's Rural Transit System of the Year Award for 2022. The award was presented by Ricky Serna, Secretary of Transportation for the State of New Mexico at the New Mexico Transit Association Annual Leadership Conference and Expo on Monday, March 20, 2023, at Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico.

The award honors one rural transit operation among similar-sized transit agencies serving rural areas across the state which has demonstrated excellence in system performance based upon ridership, customer service, service expansion and financial management. Additionally, the SCRTD was acknowledged for providing emergency services to Sierra County's Senior Meals program during the pandemic when there were no resources available to transport critical meals to over 300 families every month for over two years.

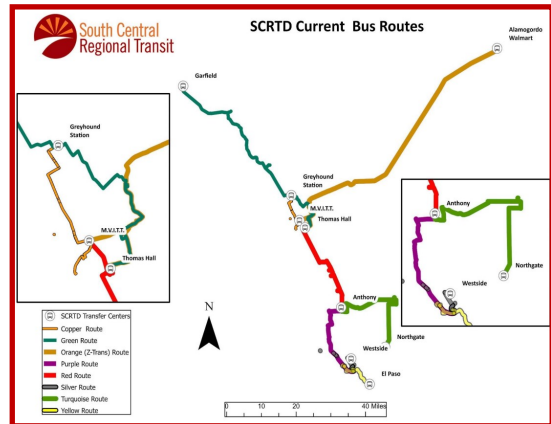


"This award exemplifies the collective work and effort by our employees and our community who continue to support and ride SCRTD service," said David Armijo, Executive Director of SCRTD. Sunland Park Mayor and SCRTD Board Chairman added, "Ridership has grown each of the past three years as we continue to prepare for the future with the addition of zero emission, battery electric buses."

SCRTD has successfully executed key projects that have helped to improve safety, increased ridership, and improved communication while increasing regional service levels. "New buses, a new mobility initiative, new passenger amenities and enhanced service hours, both evening and weekends, are improvements that our community has asked for and we are providing," said Perea.

#### About SCRTD

The South Central Regional Transit District was established in 2006 and began bus service in 2016. The district operates eight fixed-bus routes traveling over 500,000 miles annually across a four-county service area.







### **Upcoming NMTA Quarterly Training Sessions and Transit Conferences...**

**Future training dates to be announced.**

#### **More From NMTA...**

Please check [nm-ta.com](http://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](http://nm-ta.com) website .

**Follow us on Social Media:**

**Facebook @New Mexico Transit Association**

**Twitter @NM\_Transit**

#### **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 all the positive service transit provides in our state. The more stories you contribute with us, the more information we have to share.

Articles can be highlights of special staff members who always go above and beyond to ensure quality service, stories from our passengers sharing their experience and the role that public transit plays in their lives, or about your agencies involvement in community activities/events.

Email your story to Melissa Drake at [mdrake@nm-ta.com](mailto:mdrake@nm-ta.com) today!

## NMTA Board of Directors Contact Information

### Executive Board of Directors

#### **Elizabeth Carter, President**

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

#### **James Barela, Vice President**

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

#### **Ed Powers, Treasurer**

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

#### **Rebecka Hicks, Secretary**

Director Representing Rural Transit Systems  
Roswell Transit  
Contact Info:  
Office: (575) 624-6766  
Email: b.hicks@roswell-nm.gov

### Ex-Officio Director

#### **Kevin Olinger**

Transit Bureau Chief , NMDOT  
Contact Info:  
Office: (505) 469-3595  
Kevin.Olinger@state.nm.us

### Directors

#### **Michael Bartholomew**

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

#### **Brent Roy**

Business Director  
Creative Bus Sales  
Contact Info:  
Office: (682) 808-9830  
Email: broy@creativebussales.com

#### **Todd Naktewa**

Director Representing Tribal Transit  
Pueblo of Zuni—A:Shiwi Transit  
Contact Info:  
Office: (505) 782-7288  
Email: todd.naktewa@ahiwi.org

#### **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

#### **(Currently Open)**

Director Representing Enhanced Mobility of Seniors  
and Individuals with Disabilities



P.O. Box 15272  
Rio Rancho, NM 87174

Phone: 505-796-8377  
Fax: 505-212-0525  
E-mail: info@nm-ta.com