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**News from the NM Transit Association President**



Happy New Year!

It is shaping up to be a busy year for NMTA. Melissa Drake and I were asked to participate on a panel of presenters at UNM's 59th Paving & Transportation

Conference on January 4, 2024, to discuss how NMTA is Moving Transportation Forward which included NMTA's legislative effort to create a State Transportation Trust Fund. Other presenters on the panel included:

- ABQ Ride on their ABQ Uptown Transit Center
- Los Alamos National Laboratory presented on Solving Organizational Growth Challenges with Transit Solutions
- Frank Bouchier presented on the Ballon Fiesta Bike Valet Program
- Kevin Olinger of NMDOT provided a Statewide Public Transportation Update.

Although we felt like fish out of water, the Public Transit Innovation to Solve Transportation Challenges Session was a full session. Melissa and I want to thank Lisa L. Losada-Rojas, PhD of UNM for inviting us to participate. The conference had over 750 registrants.

I also participated in a panel session along with other state transit association representatives on February 5, 2024, at the South West Transit Conference in Tulsa, OK. Each panelist presenter discussed what their state association does, current challenges are, as well as any innovative solutions being deployed are.

Additionally, the Legislative and Communications Subcommittee finalized the one-sheet for the State Transportation Trust Fund. Melissa Drake emailed this one-sheet as well as the link to the pre-filed HB 42 (<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/24%20Regular/bills/house/HB0042.html>) to all the NMTA member agencies. HB 42 was sponsored by Representatives Dayan Hochman-Vigil, Joy Garratt, and Senator Michael Padilla.

NMTA's lobbyist J.D. Bullington informed the Legislative and Communications Subcommittee that Representative Cathrynn Brown and Randall Pettigrew introduced HB 146 (<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/24%20Regular/bills/house/HB0146.html>) to create a Transportation Trust Fund which would annually distribute 5 percent of the preceding three calendar-year ending balances. Those monies could only be used on "projects that incorporate federally required measures, aligned with the Department of Transportations' long-range plans, and address the multimodal needs of New Mexicans." The fund would be seeded with \$400 million from the revenue boom, but going forward it would also receive an annual infusion of 1 percent of the gross receipts tax on electricity as well as a percentage from the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax. The bill also creates a new earmark for all capital outlay balances appropriated from the general fund, that otherwise would revert to the general fund. This is not a new tax; it is an appropriation, redirection of existing tax revenue and so-called "stranded" capital outlay appropriations. The Transportation Trust Fund would be designated as a fund of "last resort" to help bail out the state budget.

Representative Hochman-Vigil decided not to pursue HB 42 to allow HB 146 to move forward in the legislative process. HB 146 passed the House Appropriations & Finance Committee and does not contain a provision to provide funding for NM transit projects.

The NMTA Board of Directors will reassess efforts taken this year to develop a strategic plan for the 2025 legislative session.

As always, support and assistance from NMTA Membership is a beneficial part of our legislative plan. If you are interested in joining the NMTA Legislative and Communications Subcommittee, please contact Melissa Drake. We Need You!!!!



**News from New  
Mexico  
Department of  
Transportation**

## News From NM Department of Transportation

### Sections 5310 and 5311 Applications

The application process for program year 2025 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025) Sections 5310 and 5311 is underway. As the MPO/RTPO presentation cycle concludes, staff

are now preparing the ratings and rankings of each application to be used in calculating final award amounts. If you have any questions, please contact Vijay (info below).

### NMDOT Statewide Public Transportation Study Update

NMDOT and its contractor, Nelson Nygaard, continue to make progress with the Statewide Public Transportation Study. The State of the System report is nearly complete. This will be followed by draft recommendations and a

prioritized list of programs and an investments report.

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

### NMGo! Vanpool Program Expansion

The NMGo! Vanpool program, operated by Commute with Enterprise, has expanded eligibility to the entire state. The previous contract focused on Las Cruces, Santa Fe, Los Lunas, and Farmington. NMGo! subsidizes a portion of the monthly costs for vanpoolers.

More information on the program is available at the following link:

<https://www.commutewithenterprise.com/en/partners/nmgo.html>

### Rural Microtransit Study

The Best Practices for Rural Microtransit Study is now underway. The study is examining the characteristics of successful rural microtransit programs in other parts of the country and

discussing the opportunities to launch rural microtransit services in New Mexico. The report is expected to be completed later this year.

### Staffing Update

We are pleased to welcome Delilah Garcia back to the NMDOT Transit Bureau as our new Transit Planning and Service Coordination Manager. Most of you know Delilah from her previous role as Operations Manager for NCRTD, and prior to that, she worked here at NMDOT Transit as a Rural Programs Manager.

Delilah will oversee the administration of MPO and FTA Small Urban 5307 awards as well as the NMGo! vanpool program. She will also work closely with Jason Park on the management of the NMDOT Park and Ride service.

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## RoadRUNNER Transit's Journey To A Greener Tomorrow

RoadRUNNER Transit serving the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico, offers a range of services designed to meet the diverse needs of its community. The service operates eight major bus routes, covering critical areas across the city. These routes include various destinations like shopping centers, employment hubs, healthcare facilities, and recreational spots, ensuring comprehensive coverage and convenience for its users.



Mike Bartholomew, City Transit Director of Las Cruces discusses the intricate workings of RoadRUNNER Transit, illuminating its journey since its inception in 1986. He explains, "We operate eight fixed routes year-round, utilizing a peak service fleet of 13 buses. This includes two routes specifically designed for the campus, operational only during academic semesters."

RoadRUNNER's commitment to accessibility is further exemplified through its paratransit service, Vamonos, which caters to individuals with disabilities and seniors aged sixty and over. Bartholomew highlights the scale of this operation, noting the availability of up to 15 Vamonos vehicles during peak times.



The fleet's composition blends twenty fixed-route buses and twenty-one paratransit vehicles. In a leap towards sustainability, Bartholomew shares "We recently implemented our first five 35-foot, full battery electric buses, earmarked to replace five of our older models in need of replacement."

The operational hours of RoadRUNNER are extensive spanning from 6:30 AM to 10:30 PM on weekdays and 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM on Saturdays, with no services on Sundays. A notable milestone in its service is adopting a zero-fare policy, marking its first anniversary,

underscoring its commitment to making public transport more accessible to all.

### NAVIGATING POST-COVID CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, public transportation systems worldwide faced unprecedented challenges. RoadRUNNER Transit was no exception, as it navigated through these tumultuous times, rethinking strategies to enhance ridership and improve services.

Richard Hanway, City Transit Manager, reflects on the impact of COVID-19 on RoadRUNNER's operations. "Before COVID, we had extended our service hours till 10:30 PM on weekdays, and we observed a significant rise in ridership," he recalls. "However, the pandemic brought an abrupt halt to this growth." Hanway reveals that a strategic shift to a zero-fare service during the pandemic's decline was initially a temporary measure. This initiative, driven by the city council's push to support low-income residents and those returning to work, eventually transitioned into a permanent feature. "Our ridership has rebounded, matching the numbers seen during the late-night service's initial success," Hanway notes, "indicating a successful recovery."

At the same time, Bartholomew emphasizes the importance of transportation equity, a key factor influencing the council's push for zero-fares. He highlights ongoing efforts to improve customer communication, mentioning the implementation of new software for both paratransit and fixed-route services. This technology upgrade will include user-friendly apps allowing real-time tracking and scheduling. "By the end of this calendar year, our customers will have enhanced digital interfaces at their fingertips," asserts Bartholomew, "signaling a significant leap in RoadRUNNER's service delivery and user engagement."

Highlighting  
New  
Mexico  
Transit  
Members



RoadRUNNER

City of Las  
Cruces

## News from


 North  
 Central  
 Regional  
 Transit  
 District

## North Central Regional Transit District Approves Plan to Study Autonomous Vehicle Technology Across North Central New Mexico Transit Systems

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) approved a resolution at its March 2024 Board meeting to approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) to evaluate and create a roadmap for the potential development of autonomous vehicle (AV) technology for public transportation systems in North Central New Mexico. CTAA's National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT) would implement the cooperative study in partnership with the NCRTD, the Santa Fe Trails transit system and Atomic City Transit in Los Alamos. The significant step marks the first such study of its kind in New Mexico to explore innovative AV solutions for public transportation in New Mexico. NCRTD, along with Atomic City Transit and Santa Fe Trails, aims to research and better understand the benefits, implications, risks, and strategies involved in utilizing AV technology to address public transportation challenges. As the national bus operator shortages persist, the agencies seek to explore pilot service options to ensure communities do not suffer from a

lack of mobility options. "By partnering with N-CATT and CTAA, we are taking a proactive approach to address the evolving landscape of public transportation," said Anthony Mortillaro NCRTD executive director. "This collaboration will enable us to evaluate and harness the potential of AV technology to enhance transit services and meet the needs of our communities." The MOU includes providing access to data, collaborating on research efforts, and implementing recommendations to ensure the successful evaluation of AV technology. "We are excited to collaborate with NCRTD on this important initiative," said Scott Bogren, Executive Director of CTAA. "Through our partnership, we aim to leverage the expertise of N-CATT to support NCRTD's efforts in exploring autonomous vehicle technology and its potential impact on public transportation." The project is expected to be completed by June 30, 2025, with the possibility of extension by mutual agreement. NCRTD and its partners remain committed to leveraging innovative solutions to address the evolving transportation needs of the region.

# NORTH CENTRAL RTD

## North Central Regional Transit District Selects Living Designs Group Architects for Architecture and Engineering Services Contract

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) Board of Directors at its March 4, 2024, board meeting awarded an Architecture and Engineering Services Contract in the amount of \$342,269.15 to Living Designs Group Architects. This significant step forward in the development of the District's proposed workforce housing project in Española, New Mexico, is made possible by a \$500,000 grant from the State of New Mexico, awarded as part of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Housing Initiative. The NCRTD Board of Directors unanimously voted on Friday, Feb. 2, to enter into a funding agreement with the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) to complete the design and engineering phase of the workforce housing development. This endeavor aims to alleviate the affordable housing crisis in New Mexico, particularly in the North Central region. The proposed development will be situated on three vacant acres owned by the District, adjacent to a seven-acre affordable housing development being planned by the City of Española. The project's scope of work includes the design and engineering phase, encompassing conceptual layouts, architectural plans, engineering studies, and other related tasks necessary for the successful development of the workforce housing project. Living Designs Group Architects, selected through a competitive process, will bring their expertise and innovative approach to create sustainable, functional, and aesthetically pleasing housing solutions. Located in Taos, New Mexico, Living Designs Group Architects has contributed to the economic and physical development of the region for over 20 years by providing design services under public and private contracts throughout the state of New Mexico and Southern Colorado. The firm delivers insight and creativity to the process of making regionally appropriate buildings that are products of the owners needs and the economic conditions that make them possible. Project Background: In

2022, the District conducted a study in partnership with the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NCNMEDD) to assess the need for workforce housing and identify housing priorities for current staff. The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) connects communities and pueblos across 10,000 square miles throughout north central New Mexico, including Española, Los Alamos, Santa Fe and Taos. The signature Blue Bus™ provides service on 28 Fixed and Flex routes, two Demand-Response routes and free MyBlue™ app-based rideshare service for Taos and Española. North Central Regional Transit District | 1327 N. Riverside Drive, Española, NM 87532 [RidetheBlueBus.com](http://RidetheBlueBus.com) | 505-629-4725 | Toll-Free: 866-206-0754. A pro forma document was developed in collaboration with NCNMEDD to determine potential costs, revenues, funding strategies, conceptual layouts, and unit mix for the estimated \$4.5 million project. The DFA funding for design and engineering requires no local match, and the full cost will be covered through the DFA Housing Initiatives Program. All funding must be expended by June 30, 2024, the end of the State of New Mexico's fiscal year. The NCRTD remains committed to working closely with local stakeholders and community members throughout the design and development phases of the project to ensure it meets the needs of the community and contributes positively to the region's growth and prosperity. For more information about the North Central Regional Transit District and its initiatives, please visit [ncrtd.org](http://ncrtd.org).







### **NCRTD Blue Bus to Provide Special Express Service for Annual Pilgrimage to Santuario de Chimayó**

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) is pleased to announce the provision of special Express Bus service for the annual pilgrimage to the historic Santuario de Chimayó shrine in Chimayó, New Mexico. In addition to fare-free service from Española to Chimayó on Route 150 along NM 76, the Blue Bus Santuario Express Route 151 will be operational on Good Friday, March 29th, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., offering alternative, free round-trip express service from Española to Chimayó through Pojoaque. The Santuario de Chimayó pilgrimage, a longstanding tradition in the region, draws thousands of visitors each year who come to seek spiritual renewal and healing at this sacred site. To help accommodate pilgrims and visitors, NCRTD is enhancing its transportation services, providing additional accessibility and ease of travel for all. The Blue Bus Santuario Express

Route 151 will run southbound on US 285 from Española to Chimayó, with one stop at the Cities of Gold Bus Stop in Pojoaque and proceed to Chimayó on NM 503. The service offers an alternative route for participants who may not want to walk, allowing them to focus on the significance of their pilgrimage. NCRTD advises individuals and groups planning to attend the pilgrimage that due to thousands of people making the pilgrimage on foot or in their personal vehicles, traffic delays are expected. Due to vehicle capacity restrictions, seating will be limited on the buses. Making an alternative transportation plan is strongly encouraged. For more information on the NCRTD Blue Bus Santuario Express Route 151 schedule, please visit [RideTheBlueBus.org](http://RideTheBlueBus.org) or contact NCRTD customer service at 866-206-0754.

## Santa's Coming to Town Holiday Event

The Los Lunas Transportation Center was bustling with families showing off their holiday face paintings and excited to greet a very special visitor this past December. Rio Metro partnered with the Village of Los Lunas for their annual Santa's Coming to Town and Village Tree Lighting on Saturday, December 9, 2023. This free, family-friendly event featured ornament making, balloon animals, holiday face painting, a model train display, holiday stockings for all the kids, and, of course, visits with Santa. Rio Metro brought several

activities to the event, provided additional train service for attendees, and Santa made his grand entrance on the Rail Runner. Visit [www.flickr.com/photos/riometro/albums](http://www.flickr.com/photos/riometro/albums).



## Rail Runner Monthly Pass Fare Update



The 50% discount on monthly Rail Runner passes implemented over a year-and-a-half ago became permanent on January 1, 2024. Rail Runner ridership is now back at pre-pandemic

levels, averaging about 2,800 passengers a day. Keeping the monthly pass at the lower rate shows regular passengers appreciation for their loyalty and offers an incentive for those who have never commuted by rail to give it a try. View the fares at [www.riometro.org/trainfares](http://www.riometro.org/trainfares).

## National Campaign to Disrupt Child Sex Trafficking

Rio Metro is one of two agencies to be part of a nationwide campaign aimed at disrupting child sex trafficking at the intersection of public transportation. The campaign – Transit Against Child Trafficking (TACT) – leverages decades of expertise from some of the nation's leading experts on mass transit and data analytics. The public awareness campaign, which began in January 2024, includes social media, email communications, advertisements in and around Rio Metro transit locations, signage on buses and the Rail Runner, as well as recommendations for training and reporting protocols developed for transit personnel. The

campaign will be rolled out in additional regions with other transit agencies over the next year. Visit [www.riometro.org/tact](http://www.riometro.org/tact) to learn more about the campaign.



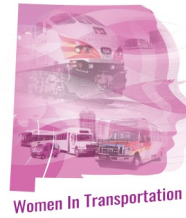
## News from



## Rio Metro Regional Transit District

## Women in Transportation

Rio Metro's Women in Transportation series highlights the important contributions women are making within the transportation industry and captures their stories. Since its inception in April 2023, 11 women have been featured. In their profiles, these transportation



leaders discuss professional achievements, share lessons that have helped them to succeed, offer advice for other women interested in entering the industry and more. Visit [www.riometro.org/womenintransportation](http://www.riometro.org/womenintransportation) to read their stories.



### 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!





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

### 2024 NM Transit Roadeo, Conference & Expo, Manages' Leadership Conference

- **Indoor Bus Roadeo**  
Rio Rancho Event Center in Rio Rancho, NM  
Sunday, April 14, 2024
- **Conference and Expo**  
Santa Ana Star Casino and Hotel on the Santa Ana Pueblo in Bernalillo, NM  
Monday - Tuesday, April 15th - 16th , 2024
- **Managers' Leadership Conference**  
Santa Ana Star Casino and Hotel  
Wednesday, April 17th , 2024

### Summer Quarterly Training

- **How to Stay Safe As You Are Involved In An Emergency Evacuation**  
Roswell Convention and Civic Center  
Thursday, May 16, 2024

#### **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**

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