Table of Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 1
Background.................................................................................................................................. 2
Planning Context .......................................................................................................................... 4
Demographics................................................................................................................................. 6
Needs Assessment ........................................................................................................................ 18
Strategies and Priorities ............................................................................................................. 19

Tables

Table 1. Service Providers........................................................................................................... 4
Table 2. Population and Growth by County ............................................................................. 7
Table 3. Potential Transit Dependence Scoring ........................................................................ 16

Figures

Figure 1. Regional Geography ................................................................................................. 5
Figure 2. Population ................................................................................................................. 8
Figure 3. Population Density ................................................................................................. 9
Figure 4. Youth Population ................................................................................................. 11
Figure 5. Senior Population ................................................................................................. 12
Figure 6. Individuals with Disabilities ............................................................................... 13
Figure 7. Low Income Population ......................................................................................... 14
Figure 8. Households without Vehicles .............................................................................. 15
Figure 9. Transit Dependent Populations .............................................................................. 17
Introduction

One of the primary objectives of the New Mexico Department of Transportation’s (NMDOT) Transit and Rail Division is the establishment and maintenance of public and private non-profit transit systems. The Transit and Rail Division provides this assistance through a partnership with New Mexico’s transit providers and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as well as cooperation with Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and local and tribal governments.

NMDOT is authorized under New Mexico’s Public Mass Transportation Act Sections 67-3-67 to 67-3-70 NMSA 1978 (as amended by Sections 37, 37-8, and 39, Chapter 268, Laws of 1987) and has the primary authority and responsibility for administering the FTA’s rural and small urban formula and discretionary grant programs.

The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), signed into law by President Obama on December 4, 2015 and effective October 1, 2015, applied new program rules to the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) authorized funding for federal surface transportation programs beginning with ALL Federal Fiscal Year 2016 funding. The FAST Act legislation continued the coordinated transportation planning requirements established in previous laws. Specifically, MAP-21 noted that the projects selected for funding through the Section 5310 Program must be “included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” and this plan must be “developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers, and other members of the public.” The FAST Act maintains this requirement.

The two primary formula grant programs NMDOT administers are Sections 5310 and 5311. Section 5310, Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, enhances mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services. Section 5311, Formula Grants For Other than Urbanized Areas, provides capital, planning, administration, and operating assistance to states to support public transportation in rural areas (areas with a population of less than 50,000 people), where many residents often rely on public transit to reach their destinations.

As the statewide designated recipient of the Section 5310 and 5311 funds, NMDOT’s Transit and Rail Division coordinated with transit and human services transportation providers, the Southwest RTPO and the general public to develop this plan. The main purpose of this plan is to analyze the transit services currently available in the plan area.
and makes strategy recommendations for transit program and mobility coordination in the Southwest RTPO. Separate plans have been developed for each of the state’s RTPO areas. These plans include MPOs, as appropriate.

Background

This section provides an explanation of the coordinated transportation planning process based on Section 5310 FTA guidance, which was released in June 2014.

Coordinated Plan Elements

FTA guidance defines a coordinated public transit human service transportation plan as one that identifies the transportation needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, households without vehicles, and persons living under the poverty line. The plan must also provide strategies for meeting the needs of these disadvantaged population groups and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.

In total, there are four required coordinated plan elements:

- **Assessment of Available Services** – identify current transportation providers from the public, private, and non-profit sectors.
- **Assessment of Transportation Needs** – identify the transportation needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, households without vehicles, and persons living under the poverty line. This assessment can be conducted through public outreach, reviewing area transportation plans, data collection, and the assessment of gaps in current transit services.
- **Develop Strategies** – address the identified needs in addition to providing opportunities to increase efficiency within the transportation network.
- **Develop Priorities for Implementation** – address current resources, time frames, and feasibility for implementation.

Section 5310 Program

MAP-21 established a modified FTA Section 5310 Program that consolidates the previous New Freedom and Elderly and Disabled Programs. The purpose of the Section 5310 Program is to enhance mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services. Section 5310 Program recipients must continue to certify that projects selected are included in a locally
developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. The plan must undergo a development and approval process that includes input from seniors and individuals with disabilities, transportation providers, and other stakeholders; and is coordinated to the maximum extent possible with transportation services assisted by other federal departments and agencies.

**Funding**

Funds through the Section 5310 Program are apportioned for urbanized and rural areas based on the number of seniors and individuals with disabilities, with 60 percent of the funds apportioned to designated recipients in urbanized areas with populations larger than 200,000, 20 percent to states for use in urbanized areas of fewer than 200,000 persons, and 20 percent to states for use in rural areas. The federal share for capital projects is 80 percent with a 20 percent local match, and for operating grants is 50 percent with a 50 percent local match.

The local share for Section 5310 Program projects can be derived from other federal non-DOT transportation sources. Examples of these programs that are potential sources of local match include employment training, aging, community services, vocational rehabilitation services, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). More information on these programs is available on the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Website at [https://www.transit.dot.gov/ccam](https://www.transit.dot.gov/ccam).

**Eligible Subrecipients and Activities**

Under MAP-21, eligible subrecipients for the Section 5310 Program include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, or operators of public transportation services that receive a grant indirectly through a recipient. MAP-21 also modified eligible activities under the Section 5310 Program:

- At least 55% of program funds must be used on capital projects that are:
  - Public transportation projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable.

- The remaining 45% may be used for purposes including:
  - Public transportation projects that exceed ADA requirements.
  - Public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complementary paratransit.
  - Alternatives to public transportation that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities.
Planning Context

The following section provides an overview of the demographic composition of the Southwest RTPO. As displayed in Figure 1, the Southwest RTPO includes Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna Counties. Table 1 provides a summary of existing transit providers serving the RTPO.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transit Name</th>
<th>Area of Service</th>
<th>Service Type(s)</th>
<th>Funding Program(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corre Caminos Transit</td>
<td>City of Bayard, Village of Columbus, City of Deming, Grant County, Hidalgo County, Town of Hurley, City of Lordsburg, Luna County, Mimbres CDP, the Town of Silver City, and Tyrone CDP</td>
<td>Demand Response, Fixed Route, Modified Fixed</td>
<td>S. 5311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Diversity</td>
<td>Village of Columbus (Luna County) and Hachita CDP (Grant County)</td>
<td>Program Sponsored</td>
<td>S. 5310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: Southwest RTPO Regional Geography
Demographics

The demographic analysis in this section highlights to what extent existing services align with areas of potentially transit dependent populations. It examines population density as well as data on youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities, those living below the federal poverty level, and households without vehicles.

It also presents two indices based on the density and percentage of transit dependent persons. The analysis draws on recent data from American Community Survey five-year estimates (2008-2012) and the 2010 Decennial Census. Mapped and summarized below, the results of the analysis highlight those geographic areas of the planning area with the greatest transportation need.

Population

Population (and population density) is an important indicator of the extent of urbanization in an area, which in turn affects the types of transportation that may be most viable. While fixed-route transit is more practical and successful in areas with 2,000 or more persons per square mile, specialized transportation services are typically a better fit for rural areas with less population density.

Figures 2 and 3 display population and population density, respectively. Both figures show that much of the planning area is very rural. The RTPO’s population is primarily located near the urban clusters of Deming and Silver City, and to a lesser extent in Lordsburg. In addition, Table 2 allows for a comparison of county population both within the RTPO and to other counties in New Mexico. Grant and Luna have more than five times the population of Hidalgo and Catron. Of the four counties, Luna is projected to grow the most over the next 25 to 30 years.
Table 2: Population and Growth by County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2017 Estimate</th>
<th>2040 Projection</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernalillo</td>
<td>679,827</td>
<td>799,465</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catron</td>
<td>3,581</td>
<td>2,418</td>
<td>-32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaves</td>
<td>65,727</td>
<td>73,393</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cibola</td>
<td>27,160</td>
<td>29,058</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colfax</td>
<td>12,399</td>
<td>11,397</td>
<td>-8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curry</td>
<td>50,024</td>
<td>59,581</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Baca</td>
<td>1,859</td>
<td>1,520</td>
<td>-18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doña Ana</td>
<td>216,637</td>
<td>273,074</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddy</td>
<td>57,901</td>
<td>58,233</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>28,168</td>
<td>24,365</td>
<td>-13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalupe</td>
<td>4,474</td>
<td>4,251</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harding</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>-33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>4,412</td>
<td>3,535</td>
<td>-19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lea</td>
<td>70,463</td>
<td>81,635</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>19,601</td>
<td>16,915</td>
<td>-13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Alamos</td>
<td>18,749</td>
<td>16,426</td>
<td>-12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luna</td>
<td>24,456</td>
<td>24,348</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKinley</td>
<td>72,772</td>
<td>75,365</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mora</td>
<td>4,593</td>
<td>3,774</td>
<td>-17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otero</td>
<td>65,858</td>
<td>64,402</td>
<td>-2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quay</td>
<td>8,469</td>
<td>7,323</td>
<td>-13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Arriba</td>
<td>39,350</td>
<td>38,496</td>
<td>-2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>19,409</td>
<td>22,719</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan</td>
<td>128,125</td>
<td>138,762</td>
<td>-8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Miguel</td>
<td>28,037</td>
<td>24,123</td>
<td>-14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandoval</td>
<td>142,705</td>
<td>213,929</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe</td>
<td>149,694</td>
<td>175,242</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra</td>
<td>11,305</td>
<td>8,368</td>
<td>-26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socorro</td>
<td>17,323</td>
<td>16,812</td>
<td>-2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taos</td>
<td>32,975</td>
<td>32,336</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torrance</td>
<td>15,728</td>
<td>14,684</td>
<td>-6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>4,413</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valencia</td>
<td>75,789</td>
<td>80,655</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Light grey depicts the counties included in the Southwest RTPO
Source: New Mexico County Population Projections July 1, 2010 to July 1, 2040, Geospatial and Population Studies Group, University of NM. Released February 2017.
Figure 2: Southwest RTPO Population

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Figure 3: Southwest RTPO Population Density

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Youth, Seniors, Individuals with Disabilities, and Low-Income Individuals

Youth (10-17), seniors (65 and above), individuals with disabilities (18 and above), and low-income individuals (living below the federal poverty level) must be identified and accounted for when considering transit need. Figures 4 through 7 display these populations. The greatest numbers of youth are located near Silver City and the northwest portion of Luna County. The senior population is primarily in Silver City and Deming, as well as throughout Catron County. Individuals with disabilities are also concentrated near Silver City and Deming. Block groups with the most low-income individuals are located in Silver City, Deming, northern Luna County, and all of Hidalgo County.

Households without Vehicles

Households without at least one personal vehicle are more likely to depend on the mobility offered by public transit and human service organizations than those households with access to a car. Figure 8 shows the households without vehicles in the Southwest RTPO. As with the other population groups, block groups with the highest numbers are located in the population centers of Silver City and Deming. However, Lordsburg, all of Hidalgo County, southeast Luna County, and eastern Grant County also have block groups with more than 25 households without vehicles.
Figure 4: Southwest RTPO Youth Population

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Figure 5: Southwest RTPO Senior Population

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Figure 6: Southwest RTPO Individuals with Disabilities

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Figure 7: Southwest RTPO Low Income Population

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Figure 8: Southwest RTPO Households without Vehicles

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Transit Dependence Indices

For each block group in the planning area, the socioeconomic characteristics described above were combined into an aggregate measure of transportation need for the Transit Dependence Index (TDI). The TDI measure is based on the prevalence of the vulnerable populations in the planning area and accounts for population density.

The TDI follows a “very low” to “very high” classification scale. Shown in Table 3, the score of “very low” to “very high” is based on the relative concentration of these populations in relationship to the average of the RTPO. A block group classified as “very low” can still have a significant number of potentially transit dependent persons; “very low” only means below the planning area average. At the other end of the spectrum, “very high” means greater than twice the planning area average.

Table 3: Potential Transit Dependence Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerable Persons/Households (# or %)</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤ the planning area average</td>
<td>1 (Very Low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Average and ≤ 1.33 times average</td>
<td>2 (Low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1.33 times average and ≤ 1.67 times average</td>
<td>3 (Moderate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1.67 times average and ≤ 2 times average</td>
<td>4 (High)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2 times the planning area average</td>
<td>5 (Very High)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9 displays the overall TDI ranking for the RTPO. As shown in Figure 9, the block groups that have a TDI classification of very high or high include Silver City, Santa Clara, Bayard, and Deming. Using this analysis, the block groups with the most transit need are found near Silver City and throughout Luna County.
Figure 9: Southwest RTPO Transit Dependent Population

Source: All census data is from American Community Survey (ACS), 2017, 5-year estimates.
Needs Assessment

While an analysis of demographic data is important for understanding overall mobility needs, it is vital to gain the insight of local stakeholders who are acutely aware of the transportation challenges faced by residents. Participants from the initial planning process provided input on specific unmet needs in the region. Information on needs was also gleaned from the Southwest RTPO Long Range Plan and the New Mexico 2040 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan.

The Southwest RTPO Long Range Plan included the following comments on transit related needs:

- Lack of reliably scheduled and accessible public transportation
- Lack of access to metro areas
- Mass transit between communities
- Connectivity (within communities and between towns)
- Route expansion of existing transit system
- Public transportation for senior citizens and other age groups
- Readily accessible public transportation between Silver City and Las Cruces and El Paso, Albuquerque, and Tucson
- No public transportation in the evening
- Lack of public transportation in rural areas
- No public transportation providers for medical services
- Affordable public transportation
- Availability of transportation services
- Transportation to larger cities by train or bus
- More education and awareness of the benefits of public transportation
- Affordable, safe, and reliable transportation to larger cities
- Increased need for shuttle services
- Affordable public transit service to Tucson, El Paso, Las Cruces, and Deming
- Current services are difficult for transporting the elderly and young due to the set route schedule
- Public Transit in the Southwest RTPO does not extend to Catron County

The New Mexico 2040 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan included the following transit related goals and needs:

- Develop community-based transportation programs that include flexible and deviated fixed-route services to accommodate riders that require ADA accessibility.
- Promote and work with local agencies to coordinate transit schedules and provide web-based schedule information on a single user-friendly platform.
- Coordinate federal, state, tribal, and local programs that offer transit and human services to elderly populations.

In sum, the needs assessment found that Silver City and Deming have the highest concentration of special needs transit populations; they also receive the majority of the transit service. However, there is need for expanded service hours and times to include additional service at night and on weekends. There is also need to provide more service to rural areas of the RTPO, and for expanded service between communities and between smaller towns and larger cities. The overall transit need across the RTPO is increasing because special needs transit population groups are growing faster than the population.

Strategies and Recommendations

Equally important to identifying the needs and gaps in existing transportation services is developing corresponding strategies for improvement. Local stakeholders generated a variety of strategies through the previous coordinated transportation planning process. These strategies were reassessed and updated accordingly.

The following strategies and recommendations are broad in scope. This is intended to allow agency flexibility for funding and provider creativity in suggesting programs and services.

- Prioritize transit service to areas of concentrated special needs transit populations
- Provide circulator service in urban cities
- Fill transportation service gaps such as:
  - Evening and weekend service
  - Intercommunity and intercity service; i.e. service linking communities such as Columbus and Lordsburg to larger communities
  - Service for rural areas i.e. service linking communities such as Animas, Playas and Rodeo to larger communities
- Introduce intra- and interstate services to between the planning area and larger cities: i.e. Las Cruces, Albuquerque, Tucson, Arizona and El Paso, Texas
- Provide connections to existing commercial transportation service providers’ intra- and interstate routes
- Assess and respond to unserved and underserved special transit needs
- Explore regional transit solutions for dispatch and maintenance facilities, and operations and administration processes; i.e. provide customers with one number to call for requests for various transportation services, information on services, and trip planning
- Work on regional transit solutions such as car and van pools
• Seek and utilize opportunities to expand, combine or leverage funding sources to increase or improve service
• Expand or enhance transportation services to meet the growth rate of special needs populations in the planning area
• Provide opportunities to add or enhance public transportation services beyond the minimum requirements of the ADA