

# **Southeast Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SERTPO)**

## **Minutes of the SERTPO Committee Meeting**

**November 29, 2022 – 10:00 am**

**Hybrid Meeting (Virtual/In Person)**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

*Member (or Alternate) listed in Alphabetical Order*

Brito, Candy	City of Eunice
Bunch, Clint	City of Clovis
Burns, Jason	Eddy County
Carbajal, Sonia	Village of Hope
Cavazos, Al	Village of Capitan
Garcia, Roman (Mayor)	Town of Vaughn
Jarvis, Joe	City of Ruidoso Downs
Jennings, Dan (Councilor)	Town of Hagerman
Jones, Walon	Curry County
Honeycutt, Jeffrey	Lincoln County
Little, Christopher	Mescalero Apache Tribe
Lovato, Ricky	Roosevelt County
Myrick, Van	City of Jal
Najar, Louis	City of Roswell
Reid, Bruce	Lea County
Patterson, Jeff	City of Carlsbad
Rael, Stella	City of Alamogordo
Randall, Todd	City of Hobbs
Sena, Ron	Village of Ruidoso
Valverde, Summer	City of Artesia
West, Joe	Chaves County

### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Bradley, Jerry (Mayor)	City of Texico
Burkett, Mickey (Mayor)	Village of Dora
Chavez, Steven	City of Portales
Dean, Ray (Mayor)	Town of Carrizozo
Estrada, Pete (Mayor)	Village of Loving
Green, Barry (Mayor)	Village of Melrose
Gutierrez, Amy (Mayor)	Town of Tatum
Hall, Jubal	Village of Cloudcroft
Ingram, Justin	Village of Fort Sumner
King, Kris (Mayor)	Village of Causey
Lucero, Amanda	De Baca County
Martinez, Vidal	City of Lovington
Porter, Tom	Otero County
Powell, Justin	Town of Dexter
Powell, Leona	Village of Grady
Sainz, Robert (Trustee)	Village of Tularosa
Salazar, Ysidro (Mayor)	Town of Lake Arthur
Seely, Sam (Mayor)	Village of Corona
Summers, Kim	Town of Elida
Whitecotton, Toni	Village of Floyd

**COG/NMDOT STAFF PRESENT:**

Arnett, Manon	NMDOT - Roswell
Briley, Alan	NMDOT - Roswell
Burr, Mary Ann	Southeastern New Mexico Economic Development District (SNMEDD)
Forman, Beth	NMDOT – Santa Fe
Gallardo, Judith	NMDOT – Las Cruces
Garcia, JoAnn	NMDOT – Santa Fe
Krueger, Neala	NMDOT – Santa Fe
Rodriguez III, Raul	Eastern Plains Council of Governments (EPCOG)
Sanchez, Francisco	NMDOT District 2 Engineer
Ummadi, Vijay	NMDOT Transit & Rail

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Allen, Glenda	City of Roswell
Avitia, Jesus	Souder Miller & Associates
Brink, Francis “Cisco”	Roswell-Chaves County Economic Development Corporation
Contreras-Apodaca, Gabby	Stantec
Espiritu, Mike	Roswell-Chaves County Economic Development Corporation
Fletcher, Jan	Hobbs Express
Giltsdorf, Sharon	Z-Trans (Alamogordo)
Gurule, Angelo	Chaves County (Alternate)
Hall, Katherine	Portales Transit
Hardin, Joe	Z-Trans (Alamogordo)
Hooper, Wes	Eddy County
Kennedy, Kevin	Village of Capitan (Alternate)
Johnson, Garry	Clovis CATS
Moore, Chris	Roswell Transit
Moore, Joshua	Carlsbad Municipal Transit
O’Neill, Peggy	Z-Trans (Alamogordo)
Palomino, Alex	Souder Miller & Associates (Roswell)
Pennington, Jacque	Hobbs Express
Romero, Roberta	Town of Vaughn
Runyan, Richard	Dennis Engineering
Ruvalcaba, Imelda	City of Eunice (Alternate)
Shields, David	Bohannon Huston (Las Cruces)
White, Matt	City of Jal (Alternate)

**CALL TO ORDER / QUORUM (8)**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Committee Chair Jason Burns presided over the hybrid meeting and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Members and guests participated with the Pledge of Allegiance. With twenty-one members present, a quorum was established. Introductions were held, with online audience signing in virtually.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ricky Lovato made a motion to approve the agenda, as presented. Louis Najar seconded the motion. A call for votes was taken and with there being no objections, motion passed by unanimous vote.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Kevin Kennedy made a motion to approve the October 20, 2022 minutes as presented. Jeff Honeycutt seconded the motion. A call for votes was taken and with there being no discussion or objections, motion passed unanimously.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

Before continuing with the public transit, the Chairman informed all that they were invited to attend a Meet and Greet luncheon that follows the meeting. Dr. Shanna Sasser, Rural & Frontier Ombudsman, is working the area and would like to meet everyone, along with representatives from USDA, DoIT, and NMDOT (Francisco Sanchez, District 2 Engineer). The Chair urged all to attend and meet these representatives, introducing themselves and talking about their issues. Regarding the presentations, the Chair commented that a time limit of ten minutes would be adhered to.

### **A. FY2024 Public Transit Presentations and Scoring**

**Opening Remarks:** Vijay Ummadi, Rural Transit Program Manager  
NMDOT Transit and Rail Division

Mr. Ummadi informed members that he is one of the rural transit program managers and will speak to the importance of these meetings and transit funding for FY24, along with the performance indicators that are used when §5310 and §5311 funds are distributed.

The Rural Transit Program Manager explained that RTPOs are forums for eliciting input from rural local governments and their public regarding transportation matters in rural New Mexico. The community's involvement in the process is crucial to the development and execution of NMDOT's programs and policies. The RTPO's annual regional prioritization of the transit applications received, informs NMDOT's processes from a regional needs perspective and is used as a criterion for the 5311 funding distribution index. The RTPO prioritization is helpful because it fulfills NMDOT's processes. It also presents additional opportunities for the public and RTPO members to see what is occurring with transit in their area. Additionally, transit agencies can see what other transit agencies are doing in the region, which leads to coordination opportunities.

For FY 2023, the NMDOT Transit & Rail Division announced its Federal Transit Grant Awards during the annual Statewide Transit Budget Award meetings held on June 8-9, 2022. The subgrantees awarded this year had submitted funding applications in September 2021. Transit & Rail always works a year and four months before the start of the federal fiscal year. A total of more than \$16.7 million in federal transit grant awards were awarded for FY 2023. Available federal funds will support capital, administration, and operations at public transit agencies from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023 (FY23). For §5311, capital is funded at 80/20; administration is funded at 80/20; and operations are funded at 50/50. §5310 funding is for capital assistance, providing enhanced mobility to seniors and individuals with disabilities. Recommended awards were mostly consistent with the requested budgets.

Requests were funded at over \$1.1 million in federal capital funds for the §5310 program. Eligible applicants included private non-profit agencies, state, local and tribal governmental authorities. Fourteen transportation program vehicles were awarded for the §5310 fund.

5311 funds are used to assist with administrative and operating expenses, providing general public transportation services in rural areas. For FY 2023, there were twenty-one applicants, all of which were funded. All funded applicants received traditional §5311 funding. There was no CARES/ARP Act funding. FY23 §5311 funding equaled more than \$13.3 million. §5339 funds are used to assist with capital expenses in the provision of general public transportation services in rural areas. Thirteen applicants were awarded §5339 funding in the amount of \$2.8 million.

Mr. Ummadi provided that there are seven performance indicators that are considered, which include ridership for the previous years; admin and operating ratio, based on the previous award; cost per passenger trip; total cost per vehicle mile; RTPO prioritization; federal admin and operating ratio award expended; and percent of ridership and award ratio. Transit grants awards, by fiscal years, are available on the Transit Bureau's website. The SERTPO Committee will consider, for its ranking and rating, on the three areas of rural public planning and regional coordination; regional need and justification for the system; and level of marketing of the transit system.

*Members picked up scoring evaluation packets, with scoring sheets due by the end of business on the next day.*

### **Prioritization – §5311 – Formula Grants for Rural Areas**

#### **1. Zia Therapy Center – Z Trans**

Joe Hardin, Director

Sharon Gilsdorf, Chief Financial Officer

The Director provided history on their organization, explaining that their agency has disabled adults and children programs, intervention programs, daycare, and Z-Trans, their transportation program. Mr. Hardin provided history on their transportation program, with public transportation starting in 2001 for the City of Alamogordo. The years and additional routes for Holloman AFB, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Las Cruces, and Lincoln County were covered. A service area map was displayed. Z-Trans is considered rural, micropolitan and small urban as they enter into a small urban area (Las Cruces), which requires them to report their National Transit Database (NTD) results directly to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and has allowed them to pick up Mescalero, who they report for as well.

Z-Trans has a one-year, five-year and ten-year transportation plan, which is adopted annually by their Board. Z-Trans continuously tries to coordinate with other systems and modes of transportation in their area. They are the only public transportation in the area. Z-Trans works with and links with Road Runner Transit (Las Cruces), Mescalero, local cab companies, Holloman Air Force base, South Central Regional Transit District, and any park and ride/ride sharing programs in the area. The Mescalero Apache Tribe route has allowed them to access §5311 funding for tribal entities only.

Sharon Gilsdorf spoke to the total application amount, individual amounts for operating, administrative and capital and explained changes between admin and operating that have occurred since the application was submitted fifteen months in advance. Their capital budget includes a Starcraft bus which has a sixteen passenger and two wheelchair capacity. Mr. Hardin named (and displayed a list) their numerous funding partners. Mr. Hardin added that the cost of buses has skyrocketed. A bus that previously cost \$40,000-\$50,000 is now \$163,000.

Regarding a formal process for public input, the Director commented that they have annual surveys from their ridership; two transportation committees (Alamogordo and Lincoln County/Ruidoso area); a disability input committee; and the Otero County Coalition. Z-Trans in

included in the SERTPO and NMDOT Transportation Plan. The Director spoke to transportation need and the reasons riders use public transportation. He added that they have had retirees give up their vehicles and rely on public transportation. There are a lot of pocket rural communities outside of Alamogordo that do not have convenient transportation access. The ridership of their transit system prior to the pandemic speaks to the basis of need for their service. They continue to seek out funding to create more service, increase routes, and shorten wait times. Using a ridership chart (displayed), Mr. Hardin explained how every area was building up to 2019 with 120,000 riders using their system, and then with the pandemic (closings, social distancing, etc.), ridership numbers dropped, which occurred nationwide. In this post pandemic period, the ridership has returned to 70,000 to 80,000 and should continue to increase over the next few years.

Z-Trans has a marketing plan, which includes local phone book yellow pages; newspaper articles; presentations; fleet advertising (which makes up their 20% of capital costs); branding through multiple-colored buses; new, more visible signage; and ETA advertising. He commented that in 2018, Z-Trans restructured their routes in Lincoln County to fixed route (previously only demand response). Z-Trans typically gets 600,000–700,000 miles on vehicles due to their maintenance, which is all farmed out. They have all ASE-certified mechanics. He continued speaking to their brake checks, rotations, annual inspections, and fares/ridership post-pandemic.

*Clarification was made that Zia will have a scoring sheet for both 5311 and 5310.*

2. **City of Roswell – Roswell Transit**

Chris Moore, Transit Manager

Mr. Moore provided that Roswell Transit’s mission is “connecting people to places”, with their vision being “we believe in safe, affordable and convenient public transportation.” He continued by speaking to their core values. Roswell Transit’s organizational chart was displayed and explained. Marketing is handled through the City of Roswell Public Affairs. Buses are wrapped when ordered; the City continues to transition from Pecos Trails Transit to Roswell Transit; Roswell Transit can be located on the City’s website; and a Facebook Page is utilized to inform of route changes, delays, etc. The Manager added that he and the drivers make visits to offices/business and distribute paratransit applications/rack cards to explain services and promote growth. A list of all partnerships was provided/displayed while Mr. Moore spoke to a few of the partnerships with churches, NMMI, Tobosa, etc. Roswell Transit serves customers on the street as well as picking up individuals from hospitals.

A graph of ridership since 2019 was displayed. Mr. Moore pointed out 2022 ridership. Numbers are going up and have doubled since last year, with ridership for November being 7,600. Ridership is anticipated to be 70,000 – 80,000 this year. In the previous year, ridership was just over 60,000. Paratransit service was also graphed for members. Their paratransit service helps take people to and from wherever needed, and it is more direct and hands-on with the customer. He pointed out that Roswell Transit is now back to pre-Covid numbers and spoke to the ridership numbers from August through November, 2023.

Past improvements include lighting; wraps on the buses; restoration of Zia light (lobby); refurbishing of the breakroom; and addition of Zia lighted sign on the exterior. Future plans include continuing with building and lobby refurbishment. The fleet will continue to be updated, with the addition of non-CDL buses. Mr. Moore explained that they currently have five positions open; hiring CDL drivers is very difficult; and pursuing non-CDL buses/drivers will allow them to be fully staffed. Plans also include working on Main Street bus stops, wayfinding and enhancing the front corner of the building. Financial information was displayed and discussed, covering

FY22 budget expenditures (pro-rated), FY22 approved budget and the FY24 budget requested. FY24 budget numbers are lower due to capital improvements not being as large as the previous year.

The Transit Manager spoke to the need whereby Roswell Transit is a vital part of the city, serving the young, old, disabled and others who are unable to drive anymore or cannot afford a vehicle. Roswell Transit is the only dependable service offered within the city. Customers depend on their service, getting to and from dialysis/medical appointments and obtaining food and necessities.

Inquiry was made as to whether Roswell Transit services surrounding communities. Mr. Moore responded that they currently service within the city limits only, however, they are currently coordinating with others, trying to eventually service outside of Roswell. The ultimate plan is to be the hub in the area and go outside city limits, such as Carlsbad or Artesia.

3. **City of Portales – Portales Area Transit (PAT)**

Katherine Hall, Transit Coordinator

Ms. Hall described the staffing structure of Portales Area Transit System, a demand response system that provides transportation to Portales and a five-mile radius of the city limits within Roosevelt County. PAT has extended their service area to accommodate transportation for medical appointments to the City of Clovis. Ms. Hall spoke to their hours of operation, serving their city population of over 12,000 and county population of 19,000. For 2022, PAT provided 9,586 rides, which is an increase from the previous year of 3,000 rides. They are hopeful to continue with the upward swing and attribute the increase partly due to the free transportation provided to senior 60 years and older and veterans.

The Coordinator explained that the expansion of their service area to the City of Clovis has also provided them with the opportunity to reach to underserved areas such as dairies and the cheese plant. While PAT does not offer regional transit, there have been discussions with Portales's city management, PAT and Clovis Area Transit this past March regarding a possible connection of the two transit systems. Both transit systems have the same issues of staffing shortages, to include drivers. Discussions for the proposed connection between the two transit systems should resume next year. PAT's short-term and long-term goals and the ongoing funding source from the City of Portales have been adopted by the Portales City Council in their Comprehensive Plan. Short-term goals include the installation of CTS dispatch software, which should help improve reliability and shorter wait times for pickups. Long-term goals include moving forward with connections to neighboring transits and continuing to look for solutions for service to Cannon Air Force Base. PAT coordinates with other local agencies that provide transportation for limited clientele, such as the Community Service Center, ENMU, Portales Schools, Los Abuelitos, Heartland Continuing Care Center, and Mental Health Services.

The Transit Coordinator listed the FY24 application totals and federal/local share amounts for administration and operating. She explained that projected increases are due to increases in insurance, material costs, and equipment replacement. Part of their formal public input process includes the open-door policy at the program office and City Hall. Annual surveys are provided to passengers, and their suggestions are recorded and made part of the transit plan review. The public has the opportunity to speak at all City Council meetings and voice their recommendations or concerns. Comment cards are available on all transit vehicles.

PAT has established a marketing plan and strategies which include brochures in all public buildings; brochures and posters in a variety of local regional outlets, such as motels, retail stores, ENMU, Chamber of Commerce; and public events. Public service announcements are utilized



on local radio and television stations, such as Channel 19 and KSEL. Additionally, PAT has a page on the City website, and they publish in the Eastern New Mexico News. Targeted outreach is conducted to educational facilities, medical facilities and other agencies that provide public service. Future plans include the placement of metal stands in different location to market their transit system. Every vehicle in their fleet advertises PAT's contact information.

4. **City of Hobbs – Hobbs Express**

Jan Fletcher, City Clerk/Public Transportation Director

Ms. Fletcher, and Jacque Pennington, Transportation Supervisor, were both in attendance for the presentation. Hobbs Express's mission is to deliver safe, dependable, and affordable transportation services in a courteous and professional manner. The Director shared the hours of operation and explained that they have three fixed routes, one rapid route and paratransit demand response service. Hobbs Express operates within the city limits and just outside city limits, within five miles. Ms. Fletcher provided history on Hobbs Express, comparing the ridership during their first year of operation (1989) with 3,900 passengers to current ridership (2022) with 826,392 passengers. Route service and mapping of routes was displayed. Funding application totals and subtotals for administration, operating and capital were charted and shared with members. Capital funds requested include one replacement bus, 12 replacement benches for several bus stops and shading for the Hobbs Express building. The funding application does reflect a 16% increase, taking into account inflationary costs.

During the City's annual budgetary process, short-term and long-term transit goals are planned and outlined. Hobbs Express is included as part of the City's overall Master Plan, which is approved by the City Commission. The Commission is currently planning and developing a new, overall strategic plan. As part of its goals, Hobbs Express continues to modify and improve passenger routes, efficiency, and cost effectiveness.

During the application process, letters of interest were mailed with no responses received. Coordination of services continues with one local taxi service, and, as a result, Hobbs Express does not provide same day service. Procedures were described. Coordination of transportation for several purposes continues with multiple agencies, such as the senior citizens program, local mental health facilities, the hospital, Boys & Girls Club, two colleges, two dialysis centers, DVR, CYFD, Hobbs Municipal Schools, and others.

Regarding regional need and justification for the systems, Hobbs Express maximizes and expends grant funds awarded and ridership is increasing. Ms. Fletcher displayed ridership numbers, pre-pandemic through post pandemic, with ridership building back up to 33,927 (FFY 21-22). The economy is growing, with a new Covenant Hospital recently constructed and opened along with several new retail businesses under construction. Citizens continue to use public transportation for jobs, doctors, shopping, and everyday life activity. Free fares are still in effect, which has helped with the increase in ridership. Ms. Fletcher described their staffing structure, adding that supervisors will drive buses, as needed. She continued to speak to their CDL incentive for drivers and a recently completed compensation paid plan adjust for city employees. Hiring drivers continues to be difficult as they compete with the oil and gas CDL pay.

Hobbs Express uses year-round marketing. Strategies include local newspapers; radio advertisement, especially during local sports games; public service advertising mailers with city utility bills; advertisement with a quarterly City guide; special promotions; community billboard; news releases; website; and social media. The Director spoke to the dedicated and professional staff and requested continuing support for the funding application.

A member inquired if they serve outside of Hobbs, such as Tatum or Lovington. Ms. Fletcher confirmed that they do not service those communities but do serve within five miles of Hobbs.

**5. City of Clovis – Clovis Area Transit System**

Garry Johnson, CATS Office Manager

Mr. Johnson explained that their program, continues to be 100% demand response service, operating with the city of Clovis. Continuing Covid-19 concerns in their area and ridership stats show the need to continue service and rebuild their capacity. Mr. Johnson added that due to staffing, they have not be able to return to pre-covid service hours and described reduced hours of operations, to include Saturday service. He spoke to suspended fares during the pandemic; however, fares are now being collected. Methods for obtaining service include reservations through their clerk; utilization of the self-service online portal; and use of the mobile app, which allows text messaging, ability to view trips and change/cancel trips. The Office Manager spoke to the number of calls received, miles traveled, service hours logged and number of trips. Trip statistics (charted and displayed) show 41% were work-related; 10% educational; 12% medical appointments; 5% dialysis; 9% shopping; and 26% personal.

Mr. Johnson displayed and discussed the funding application requests (federal and local) and explained that the City of Clovis continues to be their sole provider for the match. Due to the administration ratio of 25%, costs have been moved to the operating budget with a few exceptions. The capital request includes automatic gate openers; replacement of existing gates for which parts can no longer be acquired; and a riding lawn mower with attachments for maintenance of their yard. He added that the City Commission recently adopted a new wage compensation plan, increasing the hourly rate for drivers. Covid-Safe practices are continued, and methods used in vehicles were described/displayed. Masks are no longer required for customers and drivers; however, masks are used by drivers returning from Covid leave plus masks are available for customers upon request. He added that during the period when masks were required, there was a noted decrease in driver sick days.

For planning and regional coordination, the Transit Department is part of the City's five-year strategic plan and updated Comprehensive Plan, which establishes the vision for community development for twenty years and includes transportation goals, objectives, and implementation strategies as determined during the public input process. CATS continues to coordinate with local transportation providers in the area, such as Portales Area Transit. Passenger referrals are made to PAT to help meet the needs of the community and surrounding area. Coordination with other transportation providers includes nursing homes, senior center, non-emergency medical providers, disabled transportation, local shuttles/taxi, and the local VA clinic, which transports veterans to the Amarillo VA hospital. Mr. Johnson spoke to the coordination of services with local transportation providers for the local airport. CATS assisted in the application for funding where Clovis Senior Services now transports dialysis patient from Portales to Clovis. CATS and Portales Area Transit are assisting Senior Services with driver personnel during staffing shortages.

For public input, self-addressed/stamped comment cards are available in vehicles as well as the transit facility's lobby, along with surveys. The City's Marketing Director is updating the website, brochure and developing a new brand to coincide with the City's new brand. Another method for public input is the annual survey, which request feedback on program operations. CATS continues to look at the work and service on needs in the area; these needs and goals clearly show the additional demand for service in the Clovis area. Goals and unmet need were met through



their scheduling software. Future goals include service back to full capacity and a replacement plan for an aging fleet. The Manager described their staffing structure and driver shortages, which have greatly impacted their ridership as shown on the charts. For marketing, the City's marketing director promotes the scheduler software; prepares PSAs and press releases; and is revamping the website and brochures, which will be going live soon. Marketing tools include informal meetings with the public, radio spots, newspaper ads, Chamber of Commerce, community profile magazine, newspapers in education and utilization of social media to inform the public. Recent advertisements have been in regard to hiring drivers and encouraging ridership. Mr. Johnson expressed appreciation for the opportunity to showcase their transit system and for the support received by NMDOT.

**6. City of Carlsbad – Carlsbad Municipal Transit**

Joshua Moore, Transit Manager

Mr. Moore explained to members that Carlsbad Transit has three main modes of transportation, to include demand response and paratransit (basically dial-a-ride), three fixed routes throughout the city and a program where they transport latchkey children from certified daycares to and from schools. Carlsbad Transit's mission is to strive for the provision of safe and accessible transportation to the public and for the welfare of the citizens of Carlsbad. Priority short-term goals include maintaining a fleet in the state of good repair. Mr. Moore spoke to the difficulties with the state and nation with shipping supplies and parts, such as chassis. Currently, eight buses are owed to the transit system. Additional goals include expanding demand response services and fixed routes. An accessibility study has been recently completed; several shelters are planned; and a new mechanic is needed (most repairs are done in-house but some work is farmed out). Rider experience improvements include new shelters and amenities (part of a capital request), new low-floor buses; accessibility; safety (covid practices described); convenience; and implementation of new scheduling and dispatching software. The Manager continued by speaking to long-term goals of meeting community needs; operating safely and efficiently; and continuing to gain public support.

Mr. Moore spoke of coordination of services, locally and with state agencies. Coordination includes a focus on issues encountered and inner-city travel. For paratransit service, the Manager named transportation providers for coordination, such as Premier, Safe Care, Secure, Home Link and Ruidoso Shuttle. Their transit system serves as the backup for Meals on Wheels and Senior Rides for the Southeast Community Action Corporation; coordinates with other transit agencies such as Roswell Transit and Z-Trans; and coordinates with transportation providers such as Valley Transportation, Lyft, and Greyhound. The Manager spoke to the new software that allows scheduling through portals. They coordinate with schools for their Carlsbad After School Transportation (CAST) and all other schools, colleges, day cares and Boys & Girls Club. Coordination occurs with multiple agencies/organizations such as Hope Center (for the homeless), nursing homes, CARC, United Way (veteran transportation), hospitals, Chamber of Commerce, and World Health Organization.

Mr. Moore discussed funding, explaining that Carlsbad Transit usually receives \$5311 or \$5339 funding, depending on opportunities for the year. FY23 funding awards were provided (displayed). He explained they did not require much more for FY24, but they do have a few capital projects. Capital projects include one bus and fifteen more shelters to place on their fixed routes. The sole funder for matching is the City of Carlsbad, using fare revenue.

Regarding public input, Carlsbad Transit is always looking for feedback from the public. Opportunities include city council meetings where the public may speak; comment cards (in vehicles,

and fixed route locations); a 311 hotline; and new software which allows riders to take surveys and offer comments. The principal transportation goals of the Carlsbad Long Range Transportation Plan were discussed. Mapping showing the fixed routes and expansion areas of Carlsbad was displayed and discussed. Regarding need to serve demand, Mr. Moore stated that the demand response and fixed route ridership has increased, approximately 35% over last year. For the medical community, they serve paratransit needs and dialysis for hospitals and clinics. Service is provided to the commercial district (oil field related companies), Income Support Division, courts, soup kitchen, shelters, and others. New and updated improvements include lighted bus shelters with real-time bus finders, updated first-aid kits, and identification on Google Maps with GTFS mapping. The Manager described/displayed multiple marketing strategies, such as radio, print media, on board/fixed route location pamphlets, public presentations, website and social media presence, software, and fun handouts—all to saturate the community with the opportunities they provide. He concluded with a slide presenting ridership and revenue statistics.

Inquiry was made regarding whether they had service to Loving. Mr. Moore responded that they did have service in the past with Loving and are currently coordinating with Loving for service.

### **Prioritization – §5310 – Transportation for Elderly Individuals & Individuals with Disabilities**

#### **1. Zia Therapy Center – Z Trans**

Joe Hardin, Director

Sharon Gilsdorf, Chief Financial Officer

The §5310 application is for one vehicle that will be used in some of their in-house programs. Ms. Gilsdorf commented that they have approximately fifty disabled and elderly that are being served in their community, and they have applied for the Braun side-entry wheelchair mini-van. The mini-van is for three-passengers and one wheelchair because that fits the need for these individuals to get them integrated into the community. In addition to in-house programs, there is participation with Live Transitions, which involves the local hospital. Zia coordinates with their two nursing homes, senior homes, and a local senior center. Mr. Hardin provided that Zia always plans forward for anticipated growth. They currently have five vehicles for the §5310 program. If they can expand and secure drivers, they can assist with their large elderly/disabled population. The New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is located in Alamogordo, and Zia has helped the School in the past.

Zia is included in the RTPO/MPO Coordinated Public Transit Human Service Plan. With the 5310 Program, they are serving the demand within Alamogordo, Tularosa, and La Luz. The need continues. During the pandemic, several of the individuals served were very immune-compromised and were not getting out into the community. With all businesses opening, they are seeing a rise in the service. The Director spoke to their comprehensive maintenance plan, described maintenance steps, and commented that maintenance is farmed out to ASE-certified mechanics due to licensing through the PRC. In recent years, five new vehicles were received via the City's capital outlay. Older vehicles are starting to have maintenance problems and one of their issues has been acquiring parts. Mr. Hardin concluded by stressing that all drivers are highly trained, receiving training for passenger assistance sensitivity, crisis management, defensive driving and first aid CPR. Drivers have extensive background checks because they do have a daycare center.

Inquiry was made as to whether their vehicles carry automated external defibrillators (AEDs). The Director responded that they do not. Additional inquiry was made on possible expansion into Mescalero. Ms. Gilsdorf commented that Mescalero expansion can be an item for consideration.

**B. TAP / RTP – Motorized / CRP 2022 Call for Projects Timeline & Deadlines**

Mary Ann Burr reminded members that the Call for Projects was submitted to all on November 10, 2022—when received by NMDOT. A timeline is provided within the Program Guide timelines provided, however, the RTPO needs to establish its deadlines. The schedule displayed (and provided in meeting packets) shows a deadline of January 5, 2023 for PFFs and a deadline of February 15, 2023 for final applications. Final applications are to be submitted to NMDOT by March 10, 2023. District 2 was agreeable with the schedule for the feasibility reviews. The Call-for-Projects is for the TAP, RTP and CRP Programs, and Guides were emailed to members. For the TAP Program, funding amounts for population groups/statewide are listed (P. 3 in the Guide). Ms. Burr listed the amounts and explained that the Call is for unprogrammed funding for FFY2024. She noted that the RTP funding is for motorized. Funding amounts for CRP were provided. She reminded members that all programs are federal and reimbursement (14.56% local match/federal share 85.44%). Inquiry was made on whether there was a scoring/evaluation process. Ms. Burr responded that the applications are vetted during the feasibility review process, and applications are submitted to NMDOT. Applications are then reviewed and ranked by a TAP Selection Committee or a Recreational Trails Advisory Board (RTAB) or a CRP Committee. Awards are then announced. Raul Rodriguez commented that he served on the advisory committees two years ago with the previous call, and they reach out for an objective view for representatives all over the state. Inquiry was made regarding trails, motorized versus pedestrian or bicycle trails. Mr. Najjar commented that they usually apply for recreational trail maintenance and improvements.

JoAnn Garcia, NMDOT TAP-RTP Programs Coordinator (Santa Fe), addressed the group and explained that the current funding is for motorized and monies that are left over. Recreational trails can be included in the TAP funding. Funding amounts provided for small urban were given. Ms. Garcia stated that there is always room to look at other areas and funding opportunities. She encouraged members to contact Beth Forman or herself if they have any questions. Beth Forman, CRP Program Coordinator (Santa Fe), commented that the Carbon Reduction Program is a new program. Funding for the population of 5k to 50k is an estimated amount of 1.6 million per year. Different types of eligible projects are provided in the Guide. Ms. Forman added that CRP is for any type of project designed to reduce transportation emissions, defined as carbon dioxide from on-road highway sources. CRP is like the CMAQ Program, but it looks to carbon dioxide reductions.

Louis Najjar made a motion recommending approval of the TAP-RTP-CRP Timelines. Jeff Honeycutt seconded the motion. A call for votes was taken and with there being no further discussion or objections, motion passed unanimously.

**C. Continuation of Review and Discussion of Transportation Project Fund (TPF) project submittal prioritization for FY 24**

The Chair reminded members that at previous meeting's TPF discussion, it was agreed that a questionnaire be submitted. Reasonable feedback from the questionnaire was received with balanced responses. The Chair requested any member comments. He suggested continuing with the overall plan. He provided history of the invitations sent out to members for participation with a subcommittee. The subcommittee brought recommendations to a SERTPO meeting where all members voted. He added for this next cycle, a little more structure is needed. There have been suggestions for caps and percentages. It is hard to plan for percentages, limits, or caps when there are unexpected curve balls, such as the cut in TPF by \$5-\$8 million last year. The goal previously set was accomplished by the development of a process and evaluation system that was fair to everyone. There were breakouts [categories] that provided opportunities for small communities to receive funding. A TPF process was put together that utilized shovel readiness, which NMDOT was requesting. It also put a checks and balances on budget and time, which is why it needs to be left in place as it is a multi-year process that

needs a few years to work. He mentioned that the criteria will need to be verified. Last year, all history or data was not necessarily available. This year, the data will be available to give points and evaluate for those criteria. Based on survey responses, discussion is needed on limits and caps. Items for consideration would be the number of applications that can be submitted; whether it is permitted to deny applications that do not meet the criteria; and pros and cons of subcommittee scoring. Ultimately, SERTPO is building a program that NMDOT can support its recommendations. Mr. Burns has visited with other Districts and, thus far, no others are doing the scoring/rating. SERTPO is giving NMDOT what they have requested, which is a checks and balances and an evaluation system that sends its recommendation to the District Engineer and Commissioner. Recommendations will be presented to NMDOT, and they are encouraged to implement such a process throughout the state. The Chair requested member comments.

Louis Najar commented that he recommends two changes. Agreeing with the earlier interpretation of the survey responses, he recommended that for this year, a cap limit be placed on the amount of the application, monetarily, and, also, a cap on the number of applications per entity per type. He added that those two changes could be made, and members can see how it works out. He recommended evaluating with small changes, considering how convoluted it may become with budget changes. Wes Hooper commented that an issue is being able to protect the region as SERTPO and District 2 understand the demographics here and the needs of the region. He commented that if the system is kept open and it is so watered down and everything is sent up, the projects that we believe are most important may not be funded if funding is cut or it is a political year. Like the previous year, NMDOT is going to try to fund as many projects as possible rather than which projects are important. He expressed that there needs to be a group put together to consider all and bring back the set requirements for the applications. Joe West expressed that he believes every application is important.

Matt White brought up that previously it was stated that an entity could not put more than one street in a project. For some of the smaller towns, they may have two or three streets that they wish to be included in one project. A monetary limit may eliminate multiple street applications. He stressed that larger municipalities may have one project, one street, that could be \$4-\$5 million but for a smaller town, their need would be two or three streets to make up one project. For the City of Jal, they may need to put two or three streets in as one application, and he recommends that the application requirements do not prevent small towns from doing multiple street applications. Louis Najar agreed with Mr. White's comments and clarified that he recommended a cap on the number of project applications, per entity, per type. Mr. White concurred with limited applications. Mr. Najar further agreed to the statement of smaller entities, to make up a project of significant cost, requires more than one street. With a tentative February meeting planned, the Chair recommended a workshop for TPF, to make any changes that can be voted on during the meeting. There needs to be discussion and explanations on caps, limits, and definitions (maintenance versus capital projects). Capital projects are important, and there is a potential solution by funding a certain number of capital projects that are improvements and not maintenance. Maintenance funding was successful this year. Roosevelt and Lincoln Counties fared well with the maintenance funding, for example. A workshop setting would ensure getting the project applications properly categorized. Mr. Hooper clarified that his comment on importance was referring to the rankings such as those projects ranked 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 – what is important to the SERTPO, through prioritization.

Jeff Honeycutt commented that the process started a few years ago was intended for all participating counties and municipalities to make everything equitable because smaller communities cannot compete with the larger communities such as Roswell, Eddy County or Chaves County. Smaller communities do not have engineers on staff. Previous efforts with the process were to make it fair across the board, and he believes that was accomplished based on the funding distributed this year. The maintenance funding was spread out over several different counties and worked out really well, to include

Lincoln County. Mr. Honeycutt commented that the goal had been to help smaller communities who are limited in some areas and cannot compete with larger communities' budgets. He stated that he believes SERTPO is headed down the right path and agreed with Mr. Hooper's comments of the ranking process, making sure it is fair and transparent for all. Mr. Burns added that it was known coming into the process that there would be tweaks to the process. Kevin Kennedy spoke to the questionnaire of the suggestion of dropping planning. The Chair added that there was more support for keeping planning in, and that category will be affected by potential limits. There had been a substantial design project that was funded this past year.

The Chair offered his recommendation, after reviewing comments and until the next meeting (February), to leave the evaluation process scoring and criteria alone for this year. He agreed that there needs to be discussion, either at the February meeting or between now and then, on the limits and caps. He commented that regarding the criteria, there are good criteria, and SERTPO should move forward with the criteria for another year. Chris Little offered comment that before there is any vote, there needs to be subcommittee discussion to talk about criteria and review all. There are some items that are not agreeable to some of the entities, and there needs to be an opportunity to talk on these points. The District 2 office needs to attend the meeting. He recommended that there be a subcommittee to fully discuss and work out all concerns prior to the February meeting. Light discussion was held on the agenda item, and Mr. Rodriguez pointed out it read for discussion on the agenda. Mr. Najjar inquired of District 2 if the schedule is anticipated to be the same for this year (i.e., a call-for-projects released in February). Mr. Sanchez responded that the schedule should remain the same. The Chair stated that a meeting for additional discussions will be scheduled and held; and the information will be sent out and voted on before the next Call-for-Projects. Louis Najjar suggested that a date be considered for the second or third week in January. Discussion continued on areas for discussion. Mr. Little suggested that there are good ideas and comments, but he recommends that the subcommittee step back and look at comments, discuss and debate prior to the February meeting. Discussion was held on the timing of subcommittee; SERTPO meeting(s); and approval of timelines and any changes. Walon Jones commented that there was a subcommittee meeting for discussions on criteria last year. He offered a recommendation that if an entity is questioning the criteria that the subcommittee had put together and brought to SERTPO for approval, to have the entity(ies) provide their recommendation on what they would like to see changed ahead of a meeting to shorten up the timeframe. He added that this could be sent out to the SERTPO Committee where they can make and submit their recommended changes and have the subcommittee meeting. The Chair confirmed for a member that he was already part of the subcommittee and, with there being no further comments, the TPF discussion was concluded. A meeting date will be set, and notification will be shared with members.

## **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

### **SERTPO Program Managers Update**

Mary Ann Burr, SNMEDD/COG, reminded members attending virtually to turn in scoring sheets by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday. Once received, results can be compiled. She also informed members of two upcoming conferences for which they may be interested. The 58<sup>th</sup> Paving & Transportation Conference is being held on January 4-5, 2023, and the New Mexico Counties Legislative Conference is being held on January 16-19, 2023.

Raul Rodriguez informed members that the Annual Performance & Expenditure Report (APER) is due shortly to NMDOT. He has submitted his quarterly report with the Christmas holidays coming up. If any member wishes to have a recording of the US DOT training presentation held in November, he can make that available, and it will be posted on the [www.rtpnm.org](http://www.rtpnm.org) website. He added that the Eastern Plains Council of Governments Board meeting for December has been cancelled.



**Local Project Updates / NMDOT Updates**

Manon Arnett, District 2, reported that the District has 134 active local government projects in southeastern New Mexico – 31 TPF, 72 LGRF and 31 Capital Outlay. She reminded members to please stick to any project deadlines and urged members with projects to close-out, to get to those in as soon as possible. For those eligible for T/LPAs, she urged them to apply as early as possible via e-mail. Ms. Arnett explained that she is the community liaison and has been visiting with communities. She offered her business cards for any entities in attendance who would like to meet with her.

Francisco Sanchez, District 2 Engineer, commented that the legislative session is coming up, and it is the time they will start meeting with Legislative Finance Committee to propose and discuss the budget they would like to see. TPF is included in the budget, and the District is an advocate for the program. He urged everyone to voice how well the program has worked for their communities to the legislature. TPF funding is recurring, part comes through the excise tax, but a bulk also comes from the General Fund, which comes through legislator partners. He commended SERTPO for what they do. Other Districts are doing their processes differently. He supports the work of the Committee as the locals know their needs and what is best for their communities. As brought up earlier, every road is important to somebody in that community. Together, the best way to come up with projects is needed, with recommendations through District 2, and he can be fully confident when he takes it to the Secretary’s office.

Mr. Sanchez added that he will be attending the subcommittee. The base of the evaluation program is good. Tweaking the program is the way for improvement, and they would like to give their voice, collaborate, and be involved in that conversation. He expressed thanks to SERTPO for what they do, working together to make the southeast better.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The Chair will visit with RTPO staff to determine if the next meeting shall be in January or February, and members will be notified.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

**APPROVED BY:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
SERTPO Committee Chair/Vice Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**ATTESTED BY:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
SERTPO Program Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date