



May 4, 2022

Administrator Nuria Fernandez, Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support for the North Central Regional Transit District Section 5339(b) grant application for onboard HEPA air filtration for transit vehicles

Dear Administrator Fernandez,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Northern Pueblos Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NPRTPO), in support of the request for funding from North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) to fund the procurement and installation of HEPA air filtration systems onboard each NCRTD transit vehicle through the Federal Transit Administration's FY2022 5339(b) Bus and Bus Facilities discretionary grant program. These improvements will benefit both the safety of the bus operators and the traveling public.

At the outset of the pandemic, plastic shrouds were installed around the operator compartments in each bus in NCRTD's fleet as a temporary measure to prevent the spread of airborne pathogens, specifically COVID-19. Now that over two years have passed since the beginning of the pandemic, more permanent measures are required to protect both NCRTD personnel and customers and prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the villages, towns, cities, and pueblos the NCRTD serves. These services include regional fixed route, ADA paratransit, and on demand mobility services in Taos, Rio Arriba, Los Alamos, and Santa Fe counties in northern New Mexico, covering approximately 10,000 square miles and serving a regional population of 280,000 people, as well as tourists who visit the area's many cultural and historical attractions.

To supplement the installation of permanent barriers, NCRTD seeks funding to procure and install enhanced air filtration systems on each bus in order to protect NCRTD staff and passengers. NCRTD's top priority is the safety of its employees and customers, and by including the air filters on each bus, NCRTD can take steps to proactively reduce the risk of exposure to airborne pathogens. By including these measures on every bus in the fleet, the likelihood of transmission is greatly reduced, thereby enhancing safety for both transit operators and the passengers they are responsible for transporting. These systems can also act as a tool to grow ridership by improving the public's perception of the safety of utilizing transit services.

NPRTPO is a public body that includes tribal and local public agencies in the four counties covered by NCRTD (Taos, Rio Arriba, Los Alamos, and Santa Fe). NPRTPO recognizes the services that NCRTD provides to this four-county region and beyond and supports NCRTD's efforts to improve the health and safety of the traveling public and NCRTD staff, to improve the lives of New Mexicans through safe and reliable public transit services, including in tribal and rural communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Candyce O'Donnell
Northern Pueblos RTPO Chair
Taos County Commissioner-District V

CC: Anthony Mortillaro, NCRTD Executive Director
Bryce Gibson, NCRTD Planning and Projects Manager
Paul Sittig, Northern Pueblos RTPO Transportation Planner