Four Corners Coordinated Transit Plan

Southwest Colorado Council of Governments

2018

NELSON
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1 INTRODUCTION

COORDINATED PLANNING

Presidential Executive Order 13330 on the Coordination of Human Service Programs, issued by the president on February 24, 2004, created an interdepartmental Federal Council on Access and Mobility to undertake collective and individual departmental actions to reduce duplication among federally funded human service transportation services, increase the efficient delivery of such services, and expand transportation access for older individuals, people with disabilities, people with low income, children, and other disadvantaged populations within their own communities.

In 2006, the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) established an executive order stating that agencies involved in the coordination or delivery of transportation services are required to produce a coordinated public transit human service plan. That executive order was carried over to the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) in 2012, and subsequently the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015. Additionally, federal transit law requires that projects selected to receive funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program are "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit human service transportation plan," and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of the public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human service providers and other members of the public" utilizing transportation services.

ABOUT THIS PLAN

One of the greatest challenges in the Four Corners region is adequate public transportation. The region itself is vast, encompassing four states: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, and includes multiple challenges to providing cohesive transportation, such as topography and a highly rural landscape.

The purpose of this plan is to operate as a guide for the implementation of comprehensive, regional transit coordination. This plan includes a listing of existing services available in the region as well as background information regarding those services. This plan makes recommendations on services and strategies designed to best suit the region and meet various transportation needs.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The initial project phase examined existing services available in the Four Corners region, not only to understand the range of service available to consumers, but also to ascertain how existing services are managed and operated. This background information assisted in evaluating the institutional resources available to develop a broader and more comprehensive program. A thorough assessment of existing services helped to identify strategies that were appropriate for the region. The assessment also helped to determine how SWCCOG and stakeholders may best proceed to build the framework for a more coordinated four-state system.

Developing a service inventory and understanding of service coverage will also support an analysis of service and programmatic needs. The project team examined and assessed the needs of customers and tourists alike, to determine the most appropriate strategies for the region. Working closely with stakeholders in the

Four Corners region, the list was prioritized and articulated into a series of implementation strategies that support and help strengthen the recommended framework designed around clear-cut goals and objectives, and will help implement coordinated services to meet the regional needs.

PLAN PROCESS

The coordinated planning process, while prescriptive, does allow room for each individual region to determine strategies, or recommendations, that are best suited to improving overall coordination in the respective region. In general, however, the coordinated planning process consists of the following steps:

- **Assessment of transportation needs** for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with limited income
- **Inventory of available services** that identifies areas of redundant service and gaps in service
- **Strategies** to address identified gaps in service
- Identification of **coordination actions to eliminate or reduce duplication** in services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources
- **Prioritization** of implementation strategies

2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The transit picture of the Four Corners region is very complex. Not only is the area governed by four states, but there are also three Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regions determining the allocation of Section 5311 funds (among other streams), at least four councils of government (COGs), at least one metropolitan planning organization (MPO), and a nebulous definition of the number of counties and population centers.

The Four Corners region's definition is loose, but this study incorporates the boundaries of the COGs which touch the meeting point of Four Corners National Monument as a starting point for understanding variations and opportunities for coordinated transit between the states. They are (and headquartered in):

- Northern Arizona Council of Governments (Flagstaff, AZ)
- Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (Durango, CO)
- Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (Gallup, NM)
- Southeastern Utah Association of Local Governments (Price, UT)

Summaries of the area under the purview of these COGs are detailed in Figure 1.

THE FOUR CORNERS REGION

Figure 1 Overview of Essential Four Corners Facts

STATE OF UTAH
- **FTA Region:** 8 (Denver)
- **Reservations:** Ute Mountain Ute, Uintah and Ouray; Navajo Nation
- **Distance from Four Corners to Capital (Salt Lake City):** 380 miles; 6.25 hours
- **COG Counties:** Carbon, Emery, Grand, San Juan (4)
- **2017 Population of COG Area:** 55,402
- **Population Change from 2010:** -1.7%

STATE OF COLORADO
- **FTA Region:** 8 (Denver)
- **Reservations:** Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute
- **Distance from Four Corners to Capital (Denver):** 420 miles; 7.5 hours
- **COG Counties:** Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan (5)
- **2017 Population of COG Area:** 97,826
- **Population Change from 2010:** +6.7%

STATE OF ARIZONA
- **FTA Region:** 9 (San Francisco)
- **Reservations:** Navajo Nation, Yavapai-Apache, Hopi
- **Distance from Four Corners to Capital (Phoenix):** 370 miles; 5.75 hours
- **COG Counties:** Apache, Navajo, Coconino, Yavapai (4)
- **Population of COG Area:** 549,506
- **Population Change from 2010:** +4.8%

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
- **FTA Region:** 6 (Fort Worth)
- **Reservations:** Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Acoma, Laguna, and Zuni
- **Distance from Four Corners to Capital (Santa Fe):** 260 miles; 4.5 hours
- **COG Counties:** Cibola, McKinley, San Juan (3)
- **2017 Population of COG Area:** 226,343
- **Population Change from 2010:** -1.1%

PAST PLANS

The Four Corners region encompasses many different jurisdictions, each of which has developed multiple plans and processes to account for the transportation infrastructure, the propensity for expanding, and the feasibility of programming such an expansion (and maintenance). The contents of each plan includes many details and varying priorities but, ultimately, from a larger interstate perspective, there is much common ground. This is important because the shared characteristics and priorities of the four states can emerge as a starting point for a true coordinated effort to expand and maintain a *bona fide* Four Corners transit service.

This report section provides a summary-level review of the transit planning context in the Four Corners Region. Transportation plans at local, regional, and state levels – from approximately the past 10 years – were reviewed to identify context to transit service coordination in the Four Corners Region.

Each of the following plans, which were provided to Nelson\Nygaard by project stakeholders, was reviewed. Special attention was paid to each plan's purpose, the identified transportation needs, and recommendations. It is important to know, however, that this is a "snapshot" of the "lay of the land" in terms of transportation and transit conditions. Due to the complexities and unofficial definition of the Four Corners Region, there may be entities and plans that are not included in this review, but they should not be discounted.

Figure 2 Overview of Reviewed Plans

State	Plan	Year	Agency
Arizona	Coordinated Mobility Plan	2017	Northern Arizona Council of Governments
Colorado	Regional Public Transit Feasibility Report	2015	Southwest Colorado Council of Governments
Colorado	Southwest Transportation Planning Region Regional Coordinated Transit & Human Services Plan	2014	Colorado Department of Transportation Division of Transit and Rail, Southwest Transportation Planning Region
Colorado	Gunnison Valley Regional Coordinated Transit and Human Services Plan	2014	Colorado Department of Transportation Division of Transit and Rail, Gunnison Valley Transportation Planning Region
Colorado	Southwest Colorado Regional Transit Feasibility Study	2009	Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado
Colorado	Inventory and Prioritization of Roads in La Plata County for Improved Bicycling, Pedestrian, and Motorist Safety	2007	Safe Roads Coalition
New Mexico	Northwest RTPO and Farmington MPO	2015	New Mexico Department of Transportation
New Mexico	Statewide Public Transportation Plan	2010	New Mexico Department of Transportation Transit and Rail Division
New Mexico	Rural Transit Study	2005	Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments
Utah	Southeastern Utah Coordinated Human Service Public Transportation Plan Update	2015	Southeastern Utah Association of Local Governments
Utah	Coordinated Human Service Public Transportation Plan	2007	Utah United We Ride Board

Key Findings

- The reviewed plans were created for multiple reasons and were therefore highly varied in their goals. Several of these plans were written to conform to federal requirements, particularly those originating and specific to activities within the MPO boundaries. Other plans originated from a special need (such as the Regional Rural Transit Feasibility Study).
- Most of the plans sought to identify gaps, barriers, and needs pertaining to transportation options in the respective areas.
- A majority of plans noted a combination of limitations in geography and resources for public transportation service and operation. Some also noted the lack of marketing and popular awareness of existing services.
- Information and awareness was not limited to just the population of transit riders. The NACOG Coordinated Mobility Plan noted a need for providers to share information and resources to help identify duplications and gaps in the network.
- Many plans noted a presence of vulnerable populations (including people with low income, people with mental and physical disabilities, and senior populations) but were inconsistent in conveying these facts. Several noted proportional changes on a county or regional level. The Northwest RTPO

and Farmington MPO Plan, however, used a comprehensive demographic index and GIS mapping to locate pockets of where populations potentially in need of public transportation resided at a Census Block group level.

- Plans noted the importance of synergistic planning for transit service alongside other transportation modes. For example, the La Plata County roads assessment noted how "failure to provide an accessible pedestrian network for people with disabilities often requires the provision of costly paratransit service."
- Few plans identified future transit funding options beyond existing federal, state, and local streams. However, the SWCCOG Transit Feasibility Report made multiple suggestions of new dedicated streams for public transportation. Those worthy of consideration for future implementation and political buy-in include:
  - sales taxes
  - property taxes
  - vehicle fees
  - parking fees for localities
  - increased fuel taxes
  - vehicle-miles traveled fees
  - corporate sponsorships and public-private partnerships
  - transient taxes on hotel occupancy
  - gaming taxes on casinos
- The importance of transportation to and from major employers outside the immediate region were noted, including the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (Farmington), Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory (Durango), and various casinos and hotels.
- A need for transportation to and from major cities, particularly those with Veterans Affairs facilities (like Grand Junction, Flagstaff, and Albuquerque) was noted.
- Plans did detail corridors and locations of particular importance, including:
  - "the most common commute patterns in the region include the west-east route from Montezuma to La Plata and the north-south route from New Mexico to La Plata," (SWCCOG 2014)
  - along major corridors in between Farmington and Aztec, and between Farmington and Bloomfield

Figure 3 Reviewed Plans

State	Plan	Relevant Short-Term Priorities	Relevant Long-Term Priorities
Arizona	Coordinated Mobility Plan	▪ Create a mobility advisory committee ▪ Upgrade fleets ▪ Standardized reporting and tracking forms ▪ Identify service areas of the many providers	▪ Development of route management software ▪ Establish a centralized call center ▪ Matching county funds for local mobility managers ▪ Offering guidance to agencies regarding contract language and referral services
Colorado	Regional Public Transit Feasibility Report	▪ Produce a "clear delineation of what the expected role of SWCCOG will be in the coordination of transportation and human services"	Strategies were not given an implementation timeline.

		▪ Hire dedicated staff on coordination and funding efforts ▪ Collaborate with jurisdictions to develop a fixed intercity transit service between Cortez and Durango, following US Highway 160.	
Colorado	Southwest Transportation Planning Region Regional Coordinated Transit & Human Services Plan	▪ Full-time staffing for dedicated regional mobility managers ▪ Sustaining online portals (such as SW Connect) ▪ Creating public-private partnerships for enhancing and streamlining services ▪ Expanding car sharing and vanpooling options for employers ▪ Expanding van services for veterans ▪ Implementing voucher programs for low-income, elderly, and/or disabled local transit riders ▪ Maintaining all existing public transit services at the country level ▪ Planning for further opportunities for fare integration, park-and-ride locations, and programming intercity and regional bus networks ▪ Identifying new funding opportunities via local match, discretionary grants, and cost sharing	▪ Centralizing all information pertaining to services under the umbrella of the Regional Transit Coordination Council as a one-stop "clearinghouse of information" ▪ Developing feeder bus services with increased service frequencies to intercity and regional stations ▪ Subsidizing Mountainside Concierge transit for San Juan County's low-income residents ▪ Coordinating to create rail transit between Silverton and Durango for residents (not just tourists)
Colorado	Gunnison Valley Regional Coordinated Transit and Human Services Plan	▪ Continued funding of existing services and creation of new connective service to Montrose via Gunnison, Delta, and Telluride ▪ Expanded human services transportation funding for the region ▪ Creating dedicated and stable funding sources ▪ Centralizing the call center and mobility management for the region ▪ Establishing upgraded assets (e.g., bus stops) and asset management practices	▪ Strategies were not given an implementation timeline
Colorado	Southwest Colorado Regional Transit Feasibility Study	▪ Form a Coordinating Council ▪ Hire a Mobility Manager ▪ Intercity Service ▪ Improve Rideshare Program	▪ Increase all Intercity Services to 5-days/week
Colorado	Inventory and Prioritization of Roads in La Plata County for Improved Bicycling, Pedestrian, and Motorist Safety	▪ An accommodation policy to be adopted at the County, State, and City of Durango levels to "incorporate bicycling and walking facilities into all transportation projects."	None

New Mexico	Northwest RTPO and Farmington MPO	▪ Servicing places with "high concentrations of special needs populations" ▪ Increasing intercity connections to centers including locations like "Albuquerque, Aztec, Bloomfield, Farmington, Gallup, the NAPI Center, and Durango, Colorado," as well as "educational and healthcare facilities" ▪ Introducing services "to unserved or underserved populations in both urban and rural areas" ▪ Improving demand-responsive and transit information services with sharing operational resources and a "one number to call" mentality ▪ Improving services to go "beyond the minimum requirements of the ADA" ▪ Coordinating with providers and agencies "to fill transportation service gaps"	▪ Submitting transit data to Google for Google Transit Feed Specification to assist with rider information ▪ Install Traffic Signal Priority on buses ▪ Encourage land use patterns with mixed uses and higher density areas that support transit
New Mexico	Statewide Public Transportation Plan	▪ "Continued use of the Regional Transit District (RTD) model for addressing public transportation needs in the state" ▪ Human services and coordinated transit serving Cibola County (particularly Grants) and intercity commuter service serving the "low volume, but relatively concentrated corridor" between Grants and Gallup	▪ Coordination amongst agencies for future planning ▪ Strategic investment in key corridors
New Mexico	Rural Transit Study	▪ A 14-passenger shuttle providing two round trips from Gallup to Albuquerque each weekday ▪ The placement of stops at central multimodal locations in the town centers of Albuquerque, Grants, and Gallup ▪ Centrally located stops with "handicap accessibility, lighting, security, shelter, benches, payphone, display of bus times, bike rack […], sidewalks, [and] trash cans" ▪ Bus drivers receive regular training and are asked to provide public input	▪ The incorporation of emerging technologies and data collection to understand "possible new stopping locations" and the routes' ongoing feasibility
Utah	Southeastern Utah Coordinated Human Service Public Transportation Plan Update	▪ A centralized directory of information and dispatch center in coordination with the Utah 2-1-1 call system ▪ Education for current and potential riders, as well as service providers ▪ Development of a reliable system and roster of drivers to provide transportation to outlying areas	Strategies were not given an implementation timeline

Utah	Coordinated Human Service Public Transportation Plan	▪ Education of service providers, current transit riders, and potential transit riders ▪ Coordination between public and private service providers to expand regional transit service ▪ Coordination and education of medical personnel to consolidate medical trips (e.g., combining doctor and pharmacy visits) ▪ Development of a roster/system of drivers	Strategies were not given an implementation timeline

EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICE

A detailed inventory of all the existing transit services is featured in the appendix, which will function as a service brochure for all agencies and service centers, and profiles all the known contact information for transit services.

Public Transportation

There are 27 public transportation services by mode (e.g., local bus, commuter bus, demand-response) in the Four Corners region which reported figures to the National Transit Database (NTD) for 2017. They are profiled in Figure 4.

Key Findings

- Over 2017, public transportation provided at least 3.3 million trips in 137 vehicles across the Four Corners region.
- Seven of the reporting entities are tribal transit providers. They account for at least 225,000 annual riders, or 7% of the total regional transit annual ridership.
- Largest among the tribal transit providers is Navajo Transit System, only one of two transit agencies currently operating service which crosses state boundaries in the region.
- The other service which openly crosses state lines serves Dolores County, CO. The demand-response service, which is open to all but prioritizes medical trips in scheduling, provides service from Dove Creek to Monticello, UT,
- Services within urbanized areas have highly varying levels of efficiency by mode. In Farmington's Red Apple Transit, the fixed-bus routes cost approximately $7.88 per trip while the demand-response service cost approximately $12.58 per trip. Meanwhile, Durango Transit's fixed service and demand-response service cost $4.24 and $68.90, respectively.
- There was not a single reporting agency from Utah's portion of the Four Corners region found in the NTD, but Navajo Transit System does provide service to Blanding. Additional non-reporting services include Carbon County Senior Bus.
- In October 2017, North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD), a bus service centered on Espanola and Santa Fe, added service to Farmington to its network. Partially funded by Jicarilla Apache Nation, the route travels 111 miles from Chama to Farmington, Tuesdays and Thursdays.[1]

[1] https://www.ncrtd.org/uploads/FileLinks/ad079f8eb84c49e49e233770613806f4/AR_2017.pdf

Figure 4 National Transit Database Statistics on Four Corners Public Transportation Services (2017)

State	Agency Name	Main City	Mode	Unlinked Trips	Trips per Revenue Service Hour	Trips per Revenue Vehicle Mile	Operating Expenses per Unlinked Trip	Vehicles Operating
AZ	Mountain Line	Flagstaff	Local Bus	2,078,694	27.7	2.3	$3.04	20
CO	Durango Transit	Durango	Local Bus	472,105	15.8	1.1	$4.24	13
AZ	Four Seasons Connection	Show Low	Local Bus	169,867	22.8	1	$2.62	4
AZ	Navajo Transit System	Ft. Defiance	Commuter Bus	149,429	8.3	0.2	$15.76	13
NM	Red Apple Transit	Farmington	Local Bus	121,828	6.8	0.4	$7.88	8
AZ	Cottonwood Area Transit (CAT)	Cottonwood	Local Bus	80,366	8.6	0.6	$8.14	3
AZ	CAT Verde Lynx	Cottonwood	Commuter Bus	55,211	9.5	0.4	$9.81	2
NM	A:Shiwi Transit	Zuni	Local Bus	39,270	10.2	0.4	$7.86	3
AZ	Helping Hands	Page	Local Bus	23,226	1.9	0.1	$35.51	5
AZ	Mountain Line	Flagstaff	Demand-Response	23,128	2.9	0.2	$41.14	7
AZ	Hopi Senom Transit	Kykotsmovi	Local Bus	22,754	4.2	0.1	$21.52	4
AZ	Cottonwood Area Transit (CAT)	Cottonwood	Demand-Response	18,216	2.2	0.2	$19.33	5
CO	Road Runner Transit and Stage Lines	Ignacio	Demand-Response	17,893	3.7	0.2	$12.14	4
AZ	White Mountain Connection	Show Low	Commuter Bus	15,602	5	0.2	$14.98	3

CO	Montezuma County	Cortez	Demand-Response	15,413	1.8	0.1	$14.32	7
CO	Road Runner Transit and Stage Lines	Ignacio	Local Bus	13,319	2.4	0.1	$27.11	3
NM	Carrot Express	Milan	Demand-Response	10,250	3.2	0.1	$22.14	3
AZ	Mountain Line	Flagstaff	Vanpool	9,044	3.3	3.1	$8.52	8
CO	Road Runner Transit and Stage Lines	Ignacio	Commuter Bus	6,587	1.7	0	$76.57	2
CO	Durango Transit	Durango	Demand-Response	6,252	1.9	0.1	$68.90	2
NM	Shaa'srk'a Transit	Laguna	Demand-Response	6,016	1.4	0.1	$28.62	5
CO	Dolores County	Dove Creek	Demand-Response	5,981	1.9	0.1	$29.20	7
NM	Red Apple Transit	Farmington	Demand-Response	4,017	1.6	0.1	$12.58	2
AZ	Yavapai-Apache Nation (YAN) Transit	Camp Verde	Local Bus	3,819	1.1	0.1	$29.49	2
NM	Shaa'srk'a Transit	Laguna	Local Bus	2,998	1.6	0.1	$27.15	1
CO	Southern Ute Tribe	Ignacio	Demand-Response	1,462	1	0.1	$33.92	1

Private Transportation

There are multiple taxi services based in larger towns and cities throughout the region, including Flagstaff, Durango, Cortez, and Farmington. They typically provide service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, service is not typically provided across state lines at affordable rates.

Human Services Transportation

In addition to public transportation, at least 50 nonprofit and human services organizations across all four states provide some level of demand-response service. These services are specifically targeted towards special needs populations including youth, people with disabilities, veterans, and senior citizens. They do not typically provide service across state lines. A major exception is the emergency medical services (EMS) providers of the region. For example, the Utah Navajo Health System EMS will field 911 calls throughout the region and provide emergency service to the area's hospitals, which include Blue Mountain Hospital in Blanding, Southwest Memorial Hospital in Cortez, Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock, and Kayenta Indian Health Services in Kayenta.

EXISTING FUNDING

Formula Funds for Public Transit

Federal funding for public transit comes primarily through the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT). Funding for the U.S. DOT is authorized by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the first federal transportation authorization in over a decade to fund federal surface transportation programs through 2020. The FAST Act was signed into law in December 2015, and provides $305 billion in funding over fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for the U.S. DOT and its subsidiary agencies, including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The following discussion of funding for public transit is based on the provisions of the FAST Act effective through September 2020. The FTA allocates funding for transit systems in urbanized and rural areas and for programs for older adults and individuals with disabilities. The FTA allocates funds based on formulas or discretionary awards. Ten FTA funding programs apportion to urbanized areas or states by specific formula. Eight FTA programs are based on discretionary funding. In addition to FTA grant programs, the FHWA administers programs that provide the flexibility to transfer funds to the FTA for transit projects.

FTA FORMULA FUNDS

Of the 13 FTA funding programs that are allocated by formula, the FTA allocates funds to nine programs based on formulas that include population and land area as criteria. The FTA allocated formula funds according to classification of an area as urbanized or non-urbanized.

All areas are defined as either urbanized or non-urbanized based on population and population density. The Census Bureau designates urbanized areas based on the most recent decennial census. While the U.S. DOT has no direct role in the designation of these areas, they are critical to the administration of FTA and FHWA transportation programs. Urbanized Areas (UZAs) are important to the designation of a metropolitan planning organization and application of metropolitan planning requirements, designation of transportation management areas, application of air quality conformity requirements, and allocation of funding.

Under current definitions, the Census Bureau delineates UZAs according to population densities of census blocks and block groups and their proximity to an urban core – with the sum of the population for these geographic units equaling 50,000 people or more. Similarly, urban areas of less than 50,000 people are designated as urban clusters (UCs). For the purposes of transit funding, all UZAs are considered "urbanized" while all areas outside of UZAs (including UCs) are considered "non-urbanized." For FTA funding allocations, the FTA designates UZAs further into three groups according to population: small urban areas with a population of 50,000 to 199,999, large urban areas with a population of 200,000 to 999,999, and very large urban areas with a population of 1 million and over. Funding formula allocation and restrictions on the use of funds differ by the size of the UZA according to these three groups.

The following list of sections from the FAST Act identifies the formula funding category and the basis for formula apportionments.

Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program

The largest FTA funding program is the Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program. Section 5307 authorizes federal capital and, in some cases, operating assistance for transit in UZAs. A UZA is an area with a population of 50,000 or more that has been defined as such in the most recent decennial census (2000) by the Census Bureau.

The FTA apportions Section 5307 funds based on legislative formulas. Different formulas apply to UZAs with a population of less than 200,000 (small UZA or small urban area) and to UZAs with a population of

200,000 or more (large UZA or large urban area). The FTA allocates to UZAs with a population 1 million or more (very large UZA or very large urban area) based on the same formula as large UZAs.

For the small UZAs with a population less than 200,000, the FTA bases the formula solely on population and population density. The FTA sets aside 1% of Section 5307 funds for Small Transit Intensive Cities. The FTA apportions these funds to UZAs with a population of less than 200,000 that operate at a level of service equal to or above the industry average level of service for all UZAs with a population of at least 200,000 but not more than 999,999. The FTA allocates the funds based on level of service and performance in one or more of six categories: passenger miles per vehicle revenue mile, passenger miles per vehicle revenue hour, vehicle revenue miles per capita, vehicle revenue hours per capita, passenger miles per capita, and passenger trips per capita.

For UZAs with a population of less than 200,000, the FTA apportions Section 5307 funds to the governor of each state for distribution. The governor or designee may determine the suballocation of funds among the small UZAs or elect to obligate the funds in the amounts based on the legislative formula.

For UZAs with a population of 200,000 or more, the FTA bases the Section 5307 formula on bus vehicle revenue miles, as well as population and population density. An incentive payment is based on bus passenger miles divided by operating costs. An agency that provides transit using fixed guideway is eligible for additional formula funds based on fixed guideway vehicle revenue miles and fixed guideway route miles. An incentive payment is based on fixed guideway passenger miles divided by operating costs. The FTA apportions funds directly to a designated recipient selected locally to apply for and receive federal funds.

Eligible purposes for use of Section 5307 funds include planning, engineering design, and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies; capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul of buses, rebuilding of buses, crime prevention and security equipment, and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities; and capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software. All preventive maintenance and some Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit service costs qualify as capital costs. For most projects, up to 80 percent of project costs use federal funds. The federal contribution may be 90 percent for some projects that support ADA or the Clean Air Act.

Small UZAs with a population of less than 200,000 may also use Section 5307 funds for operating assistance up to 50 percent of the operating deficit (operating expenses less fare revenue). For UZAs with populations of 200,000 or more, operating assistance is not an eligible expense. The FTA provides UZAs that reach or exceed the 200,000 population threshold for the first time after the most recent decennial census a transition period of several years to eliminate the use of Section 5307 funds for operating assistance.

In urban areas with a population 200,000 or more, at least 1 percent of the funding apportioned to each area must be used for transit enhancement activities such as historic preservation, landscaping, public art, pedestrian access, bicycle access, and enhanced access for people with disabilities.

Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Area Formula Program

The Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Area (rural) program provides formula funding to states for the purpose of supporting public transit in rural areas with a population of less than 50,000. The FTA bases 80 percent of the statutory formula on the rural population of the states and 20 percent of the formula on land area. No state may receive more than 5 percent of the amount apportioned for land area. In addition, FTA adds amounts apportioned according to the Growing States formula factors to rural areas. Each state prepares an annual program of projects, which must provide for fair and equitable distribution of funds within the state and must provide for maximum feasible coordination with transportation services assisted by other federal sources.

Funds may be used for capital, operating, and administrative assistance to state agencies, local public bodies, nonprofit organizations, and operators of public transit services. The maximum federal share for

capital and project administration is 80 percent. Projects to meet the requirements of the ADA, the Clean Air Act, or bicycle access projects may be funded at 90 percent federal contribution. The maximum FTA contribution for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs. State or local funding sources may provide the local share.

The FTA makes available 15 percent of the Section 5311 funds in each state for improvement of intercity bus services, also known as the Section 5311(f) program. The funds are to be used for planning, infrastructure, and operating needs related to the linkage of cities through intercity bus carriers unless the chief executive officer of the state certifies that the intercity bus service needs of the state are being met adequately. If all funds are not obligated to intercity bus improvements, the funds may revert to the general Section 5311 program for public transit in rural areas.

Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program

Section 5310 provides formula funding to states for the purpose of meeting the transportation needs of the seniors and individuals with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. The FTA apportions $125,000 to each state and then apportions the balance based on each state's share of population for these groups of people.

Capital projects are eligible for funding. Most funds are used to purchase vehicles or provide preventive maintenance for transit fleets; acquisition of transportation services under contract, lease, or other arrangements, and state program administration are also eligible expenses. The maximum federal share is 80 percent. State or local funding sources may provide local share.

Section 5303 Metropolitan Transportation Planning

Congress appropriates federal funding to support a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive planning program for transportation investment decision making at the metropolitan area level. State departments of transportation are direct recipients of funds, which are then allocated by formula for planning activities.

The FTA allocates 80 percent of funds to states as a basic allocation according to each state's UZA population for the most recent decennial census. The FTA provides the remaining 20 percent to states as a supplemental allocation based on an FTA administrative formula to address planning needs in the larger, more complex UZAs. Generally, funds require a 20 percent local match, although FTA planning funds can be awarded as a consolidated planning grant with the FHWA, which permits a 10 percent local match.

Section 5304 Statewide Transportation Planning

The Section 5304 program provides financial assistance to states for statewide transportation planning and other technical assistance activities (including supplementing the technical assistance program provided through the Section 5303 Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program). The FTA apportions the funds to states by a statutory formula that is based on each state's UZA population as compared to the UZA population of all states according to the most recent decennial census.

Section 5311(b) (3) Rural Transit Assistance Program

The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) provides funding to assist in the design and implementation of training and technical assistance projects, research, and other support services tailored to meet the needs of transit operators in non-urbanized areas. The FTA allocates $65,000 to each state and then allocates the balance of funds to each state based on an administrative formula using the non-urbanized population according to the most recent decennial census.

FTA DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

Section 5309 Capital Program – Bus and Bus Facilities

Funds for the Capital Investment Program (49 U.S.C. 5309) – Bus and Bus Facilities provide capital assistance for new and replacement buses and related equipment and facilities. Eligible capital projects include the purchase of buses for fleet and service expansion, bus maintenance and administrative facilities, transfer facilities, bus malls, transportation centers, intermodal terminals, park-and-ride stations, acquisition of replacement vehicles, bus rebuilds, bus preventive maintenance, passenger amenities such as passenger shelters and bus stop signs, accessory and miscellaneous equipment such as mobile radio units, supervisory vehicles, fare boxes, computers, and shop and garage equipment.

Section 5309 Bus and Bus Facilities funds are allocated on a discretionary basis. Eligible recipients for capital investment funds are public bodies and agencies (transit authorities and other state and local public bodies and agencies thereof) including states, municipalities, other political subdivisions of states; public agencies and agencies comprised of one or more states; and certain public corporations, boards, and commissions established under state law. Prior to the FAST Act, private nonprofit entities could receive FTA funds only if they were selected by a public authority through a competitive process, and private operators were not eligible sub-recipients. With the SAFETEA-LU authorization, private companies engaged in public transportation and private non-profit organizations are eligible sub-recipients of FTA grants.

Private operators may now receive FTA funds as a pass-through without competition if they are included in a program of projects submitted by the designated public authority acting as the direct recipient of a grant.

The FTA has the discretion to allocate funds, although Congress often fully earmarks all available funding. The maximum federal share for a discretionary grant is 80 percent, although recent FTA practice is to award funds that represent a lower federal share and higher state and local contribution.

Clean Fuels Grant Program

In 1998, TEA-21 established the Clean Fuels Grant Program. The program was developed to assist non-attainment and maintenance areas in achieving or maintaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone and carbon monoxide (CO). Additionally, the program supports emerging clean fuel and advanced propulsion technologies for transit buses and markets for those technologies. Although the program was authorized as a formula grant program from its inception, Congress did not fund the program in annual appropriations. SAFETEA-LU changed the grant program from a formula-based to a discretionary grant program (49 U.S.C. 5308). The program, however, retains its initial purpose through the FAST Act.

The Clean Fuels Grant Program is available to an entity designated to receive federal urbanized formula funds under Section 5307, in accordance with the applicable metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes. SAFETEA-LU amended the term “recipient” to now include smaller urbanized areas

with populations of less than 200,000. All recipients must meet one of the following criteria: (1) be designated as an ozone or CO non-attainment area or (2) be designated as a maintenance area for ozone or CO.

Eligible activities include purchasing or leasing clean fuel buses and constructing new or improving existing facilities to accommodate clean fuel buses. The federal share for eligible activities undertaken for the purpose of complying with or maintaining compliance with the Clean Air Act under this program is limited to 90 percent of the net (incremental) cost of the activity. The FTA administrator may exercise discretion and determine the percent of the federal share for eligible activities to be less than 90 percent. Funding for clean diesel buses is limited to not more than 25 percent of the amount made available each fiscal year to carry out the program.

5320 Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands

The Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands Program is administered by the FTA in partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. The program funds capital and planning expenses for alternative transportation systems such as buses and trams in federally managed parks and public lands.

5339 Alternatives Analysis

The Alternatives Analysis Program provides grants to states, authorities of states, MPOs, and local government authorities to develop studies as part of the transportation planning process. These studies include assessments of a wide range of public transportation alternatives designed to address a transportation problem in a corridor or subarea. The federal share may not exceed 80 percent of the cost of the activity.

5311(c) (1) Public Transportation on Indian Reservation Program

The FTA refers to 5311(c) (1) as the Tribal Transit Program. The funds are drawn from the Section 5311 Non-urbanized Area Program. The funds are to be apportioned for grants to Indian tribes for any purpose eligible under Section 5311, which includes capital, operating, planning, and administrative assistance for rural public transit services and rural intercity bus service. The funds are not meant to replace or reduce funds that Indian tribes receive through the Section 5311 program but are to be used to enhance public transportation on Indian reservations and transit serving tribal communities.

Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility Program

The Over-the-Road Bus (OTRB) Accessibility Program was authorized under TEA-21 and amended by SAFETEA-LU. OTRBs are used in intercity fixed-route service as well as other services, such as commuter, charter, and tour bus services. The OTRB Accessibility Program is intended to assist OTRB operators in complying with the OTRB accessibility regulation, "Transportation for Individuals with Disabilities" (49 CFR Part 37, Subpart H).

Capital projects eligible for funding include adding lifts and other accessibility components to new vehicle purchases and purchasing lifts and associated components to retrofit existing vehicles. Eligible training costs include developing training materials or providing training for local providers of over-the- road bus services. This funding is provided on a national competitive basis. The federal share is 90 percent, and the local share is 10 percent. Funding is available to private operators of over-the-road buses.

FTA COMPETITIVE FUNDS

Access and Mobility Partnership Grants

In September 2018, the FTA announced the availability of $6.3 million in grant funding for capital projects that enhance mobility and access for coordinated transportation projects that improve access to healthcare opportunities; the purpose of the funding being to bridge the gap for individuals with limited transportation options and to spur further coordination between transportation and healthcare providers. Under the initiative, there are two funding opportunities for 2018, including the Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) Pilot Program, and the Human Services Coordination Research (HSCR) grants. The ICAM Pilot Program is designed with a maximum federal funding share of 80%, with 20% of funds from local match. Competitive projects under the HSCR program have a maximum federal share of capital costs at 80% and 50% of operating costs, with the remainder being local match.

Eligible activities under the ICAM Pilot Program include capital projects that improve the coordination of non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services. Activities under HSCR include innovative strategies to provide more effective and efficient transportation services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those with low incomes.

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grants Program (formerly TIGER)

The BUILD grants program is the U.S. DOT's answer to what was formerly known as TIGER grants, established by The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. The Act appropriated $1.5 billion for BUILD transportation grants, with any one maximum award being $25 million for a single project. There is a $5 million minimum for urban projects, and a $1 million minimum for rural projects. The BUILD program funds investments in transportation infrastructure, including transit, that contribute to America's energy independence. The FTA is the administering agency for BUILD projects that directly impact public transportation.

Low- or No-Emission Vehicle Program (5339)c

The Low- or No-Emission program (also known as Lo/No) provides funding for the purchase or lease of low- and zero-emission transit vehicles for state and local government authorities. Funding is also available for the acquisition, construction, and leasing of facilities needed to support the vehicles. Through the FAST Act, $55 million per year is available through 2020.

Public Transportation on Indian Reservations Program; Tribal Transit Program 5311(j)

The Tribal Transit Program (TTP) continues to be a set-aside from the FTA's Formula Grants for Rural Areas program, but currently consists of $30 million in formula grants and $5 million in competitive grants. A 10% local match is still required under the formula program. The TTP grants are funded through Section 5311(j) of the FAST Act, authorizing public transportation on Indian reservations for Fiscal Years 2016-2020. Tribes that are federally recognized may apply for the funding, which can be used for capital, operating, planning, and administrative expenses related to public transit projects that meet the needs of rural tribal communities.

OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT

In addition to FTA grant programs, there are other sources of funding for transit from a variety of federal agencies. In most cases other sources of funding for transit are available only to the extent that transportation is supportive of the primary purpose of the federal agency. However, the FHWA does

administer programs that provide the flexibility to transfer funds to the FTA for transit projects. Two programs are highlighted below.

Surface Transportation Program

The Surface Transportation Program (STP) provides the greatest flexibility in the use of funds. These funds may be used (as capital funding) for public transit capital improvements, carpool and vanpool projects, fringe and corridor parking facilities, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and intercity or intracity bus terminals and bus facilities. As funding for planning, these funds can be used for surface transportation planning activities, wetland mitigation, transit research and development, and environmental analysis. Other eligible projects under STP include transit safety improvements and most transportation control measures.

STP funds are distributed among various population and programmatic categories within a state. Some program funds are made available to metropolitan planning areas containing urbanized areas over 200,000 population; STP funds are also set aside to areas with a population under 200,000 (small urban areas) and under 50,000 (urban clusters). STP funds are programmed typically by the local MPO.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program

Under the Clean Air Act as Amended in 1990 (Clean Air Act), urbanized areas are classified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as non-attainment areas if air pollution levels exceed the national Ambient Air Quality Standards on a continual basis. Depending upon the level of pollution and the frequency the standards are exceeded, urbanized areas are classified according to increasing pollution levels as either marginal, moderate, serious, severe, or extreme, with marginal being the lowest level of pollution and extreme being the highest. Cities meeting the standard, but with concern that the standards may be exceeded, are classified as maintenance areas. Vehicle emissions are significant contributors to the ozone pollution. Vehicle emissions increase with traffic congestion and the number of vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled.

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) has the objective of improving the nation's air quality and managing traffic congestion. CMAQ projects and programs are often innovative solutions to common mobility problems and are driven by Clean Air Act mandates to attain national ambient air quality standards. Eligible activities under CMAQ include transit system capital expansion and improvements that are projected to realize an increase in ridership; projects to demonstrate travel demand management strategies and shared ride services; and pedestrian and bicycle facilities and promotional activities that encourage bicycle commuting. Programs and projects are funded in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas for ozone, CO, and small particulate matter (PM-10) that reduce transportation-related emissions.

UNIQUE STATE FUNDING MECHANISMS

Arizona and New Mexico have not provided state-specific funding for public transportation (capital or operations) in 2014, among other years this decade. This makes them unique among many of the 50 states.[2][3] Utah, on the other hand, has funded only operations of public transportation.[4]

Colorado is the beneficiary of multiple funding sources, including Funding Advancement for Surface Transportation & Economic Recovery (FASTER) and the Veterans Trust Fund. However, some of these

[2] https://cms.bts.dot.gov/archive/publications/state_transportation_statistics/state_transportation_statistics_2015/chapter-6/table6_10

[3] https://www.bts.gov/content/federal-and-state-funding-public-transit-2015

[4] https://www.surtc.org/transitfactbook/downloads/2016-rural-transit-fact-book.pdf

revenue mechanisms, such as the gas tax, are "not indexed to inflation or motor fuel prices," which may result in a lag between capital revenues and capital costs.

3 OVERALL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Through conversations with stakeholders in the region, visits to transit stops and regional centers, review of past plans, and the analysis of existing transportation performance indicators, multiple needs have been identified in this plan. This chapter is separated into two sections; the first is dedicated to takeaways from outreach which are applicable to the region, and the second is a summation of the full needs facing the Four Corners region's coordinated transportation system.

FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Over the summer and fall of 2018, the project team worked to gather feedback from major stakeholders throughout the region. An online survey was also distributed to service providers; 36 responses were received, including from state departments of transportation, regional councils of government, city governments, public transit providers, human service transportation providers, and human service referral organizations.

Providers were asked to voice details of their service, but also to share their experiences and challenges providing transportation. Of the surveyed providers who listed their customers' Top 5 challenges, two-thirds of responses included: **"Public transit service does not operate late enough in the evening"** while half of responses included: **"Public transit service does not operate on weekends."** This value placed on expanded service times was reiterated in a supportive survey response:

> ***"Personal experience of ridership on the Roadrunner system for the past two months: It is an effective service that would be used more if hours of operation (evenings and weekends) were expanded."***

Other positive attributes identified by stakeholders of the existing system include partnerships between separate governments:

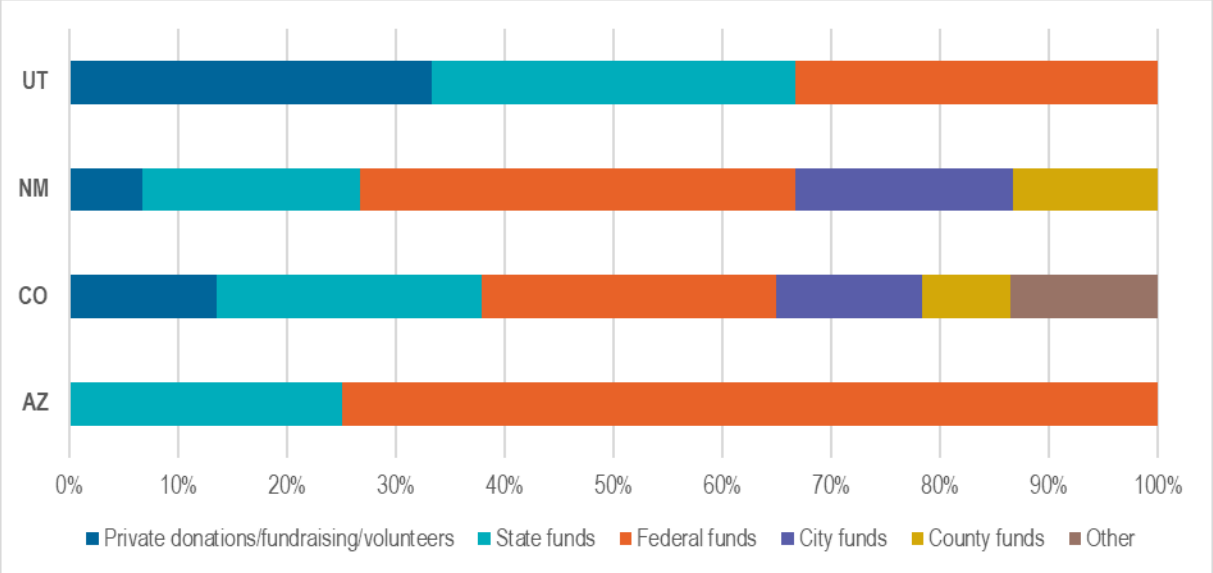
> ***"The partner transit system (Grants, Milan, and Cibola County) is a great collaborative effort in providing a transportation opportunity for those who cannot afford, whether monetarily or physical/mental health."***

However, other comments in the survey responses corroborated fiscal, institutional, and geographical challenges to improved transit coordination:

> ***"Recent service reductions based on reduced grant funding eliminated several routes"***
>
> ***"Rural governments serving large areas, with inadequate funding"***

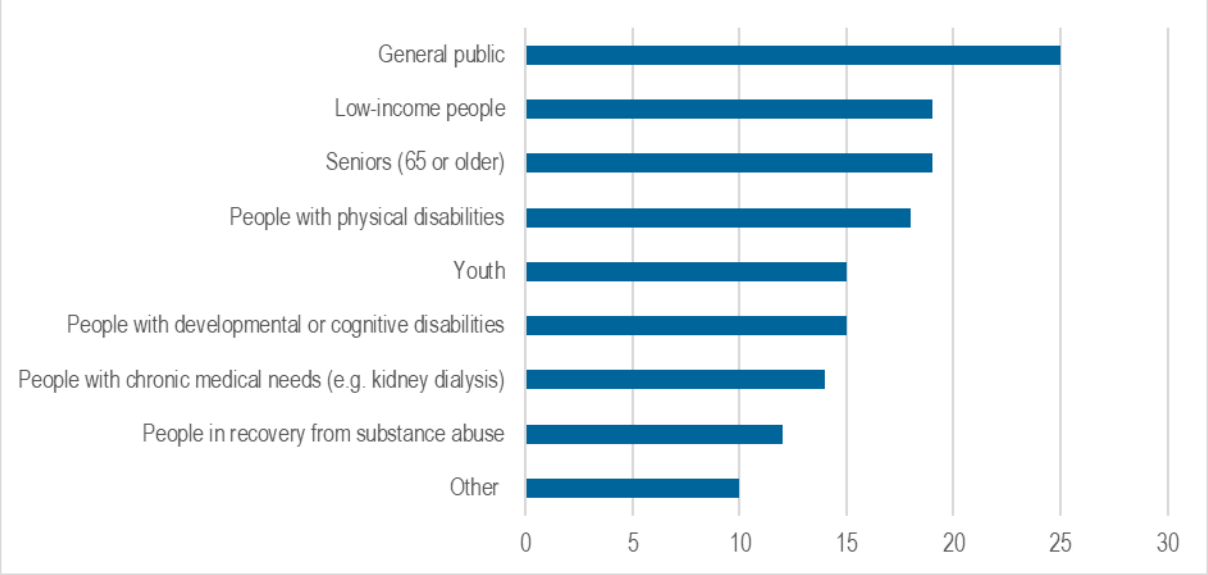
In the responses, stakeholders in Colorado and New Mexico stood out for identifying sources of funding which were not federal or state based; examples of funding sources in these two states, include municipal funds (through parking fees or property taxes), county funds, transit assessment districts, and tribal funds.

Figure 5 Distribution of Self-Reported Funding Sources in Stakeholder Survey by State



Responding organizations generally serve a vast cross-section of the public, but there is certainly an emphasis on special needs, including low-income, senior, and disabled populations.

Figure 6 Survey Responses Regarding Serviced Population Groups Across the Full Region



As part of the outreach for the plan and the associated survey, the project team attended five meetings in Durango, CO; Gunnison Valley, CO; Price, UT; Flagstaff, AZ; and Pueblo Acoma, NM. These meetings attended by the project team were the transit committee meetings hosted by regional councils of government. Feedback was solicited, and the online survey was distributed to those who were both in attendance and those who were unable to attend. Feedback from the surveys was universally supportive of initiatives which allowed greater coordination between the disparate entities and jurisdictions under the Four Corners umbrella. Notably absent from these meetings were representatives of larger tribal transit providers.

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

Building off of contributions of the stakeholders and issues reviewed in this plan, the following challenges are identified as a starting point for improvements to coordinated transit in the Four Corners region.

Due to limited resources, all attempts to cover the Four Corners region with a transit network comes at the sacrifice of frequency.

For example, service between Farmington and Bloomfield, about 14 miles apart, is only provided by North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) on Tuesdays and Thursdays (Red Apple Transit, the local bus provider, has not served Bloomfield since the City of Bloomfield withheld funds). Additionally, while more urbanized services like Red Apple and Durango Transit offer buses with frequencies of 20 to 60 minutes (as well on Saturdays), many other fixed-route services throughout the Four Corners region are limited to weekdays and working hours. In the case of inter-city routes, these services are limited to a single or two runs in peak direction). Transit services available 24 hours a day are predominantly restricted to eligible populations.

There is some overlap between transit systems serving population centers and tribal transit systems providing coverage across reservation lands.

As a result, there are potentially logical transfer points between systems in locations like Blanding (UT), Cortez (CO), Durango (CO), Farmington (NM), Gallup (NM), and Winslow (AZ).

Limitations in funding have created gaps in service, including but not limited to:

- Prescott Valley, AZ
- Aztec, NM to Ignacio, CO
- Moab, UT to Blanding, UT
- Farmington NM to Bloomfield, NM (other than Tuesday and Thursday)
- Senior transportation services in Archuleta County, CO
- Inter-county services out of San Juan County, CO

Some of these services may not have been fiscally feasible (which is sometimes connected to a limited availability of non-federal match funding). Services may also be cut due to low ridership (especially when there are needs to focus transit coverage in markets and services with greater ridership potential). Regardless of what motivates the difficult decision to cut a service, transit providers must track and convey their performance and tradeoffs to their constituents and funders.

Where there is no service, the cohesion of a transportation network and provision of access is entirely dependent on the creation and continuity of informal networks and volunteer drivers.

Government is not meeting all people's needs for transportation services, and where needs are unmet, the burdens of mobility shift to riders in need and drivers with the time and motivation to volunteer. In the plan review, CDOT surveys of seniors and people with disabilities showed that a majority of respondents rely on others for transportation and experience difficulty finding transportation for medical appointments. Additionally, where service exists, a switch in contracted operators can quickly disrupt established driver-rider relationships and trust in the transportation system.

The region's ongoing economic challenges certainly include transportation accessibility and mobility.

Good transportation access and options are an enabler of a healthy economy. It does not achieve this simply by moving people to get to work or their doctor's appointments. Transportation's economic impact includes giving aspiring bus drivers sufficient training and licensures in the operation of commercial vehicles, providing jobs for Mobility Managers and other coordination and dispatch professionals, and facilitating commerce through the provision of access to shopping centers and tourist destinations.

Meanwhile, in each of the four states comprising the Four Corners region, the gas tax is set below the national average. The gas tax is the traditional user fee for publicly funding transportation improvements. At the same time, people in the Four Corners region have voiced significant concerns regarding both the limited number of transportation options in the community and the cost of transportation. These issues may continue a self-fulfilling prophesy of limited investment in transportation programs and infrastructure begetting limited economic growth and activity.

Despite the lack of connectivity between the many transit systems and services operating in the region, there are corridors bearing potential for intercity service.

Multiple plans noted how a lack of connectivity and integration between systems essentially creates a requirement for the public to "obtain alternative means for transportation from private for-profit transportation providers, human service agencies, or facility members."[5]

The provision of intercity commuter transit service is not new to the four states containing the Four Corners; Greyhound and Amtrak utilize existing rights-of-way to provide limited intercity service, although they may be cost-prohibitive to certain populations.

However, in recent years, specialized services such as Bustang, serve intercity corridors as well (particularly from Colorado Springs to Denver). In addition, recent plans specific to the Four Corners identify propensity for intercity service along the following corridors:

- Pagosa Springs and Cortez, CO to Durango, CO (US Highway 160)
- Cortez, CO to Monticello, UT (US Highway 491)
- Silverton and Durango, CO to Farmington NM (US Highway 550)

[5] NACOG

Ideas on increasing efficiency in delivering transit service and access in the region are already on paper and in practice.

Whether it is delineating responsibilities, hiring new dedicated professionals to coordination, centralizing call centers, and training volunteer drivers, agencies and nonprofits alike in the Four Corners region are already acting and planning on these issues.

A SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) Analysis for the region reveals a balance between existing localized resources and strong fiscal and physical constraints.

Overall, a SWOT analysis can be applied to the Four Corners region as a means to understand the context of transit planning in the area. Strengths and weaknesses, respectively, are the advantages and disadvantages that are a function of the Four Corners *region* itself. Such issues would include characteristics such as the population and resources of the region. Opportunities and threats, meanwhile, are also respective advantages and disadvantages, but they are primarily a consequence of the *environment* the Four Corners region is placed within. The source of these issues may include statewide bureaucracy, federal politics, and natural formations. This may make possible solutions more obscure, institutionalized, and consequently out of the control of a locally acting agency or population. Nevertheless, when understanding the possibility and efficacy of policies and programs in the Four Corners region, the SWOT analysis may be a useful starting point.

Figure 7 Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats Analysis for Four Corners Transportation

	Positive	Negative
Internal	**Strengths** • Diverse population with pockets of high transit propensity • Presence of major commercial transcontinental corridor • Sufficient capacity for express bus transit on regional and state roads	**Weaknesses** • High poverty; limited access to vehicles, technology, and training opportunities • Limited local supply of drivers • Low population density • Auto-dependence; very low existing transit service, especially along intercity corridors • Inconsistent condition of transportation facilities and vehicles • Limited local match revenue
External	**Opportunities** • Multiple federal funding sources • Presence of community colleges and other campuses for job training • Precedent for multi-state compacts for transit service elsewhere in the United States	**Threats** • Marginalization of region in regards to statewide and urban-centric policy priorities • Mountainous terrain creating indirect and resource-intensive transit routes • Limited revenue via statewide gas tax

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

SERVICE ENHANCEMENT SOLUTIONS

Continued Investment in Regional/Intercity Trunk Services

Intercity transportation, used both for travel and commuting, has become more prominent in two of the four states comprising the Four Corners region. In Colorado, the successful Bustang service expanded its suite of Denver-based intercity routes to include the route connecting Durango and Grand Junction through a partnership with the Southern Colorado Community Action Agency (the operator). This route connects Durango, Mancos, and Cortez to Grand Junction, where the nearest Veterans Affairs hospital is located. The service previously was known as "Road Runner Transit." Its integration with the Bustang brand elevated the route's prominence and increased service to seven days a week. The change also broadened the service to a larger audience and eventually integrated an online ticketing platform.

In New Mexico, the North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) provides weekday service out of hubs in Espanola and Santa Fe. Routes go as long as 110 miles (Chama to Farmington) and serve part of the Four Corners region. As an indicator of ongoing success of the service, all four counties in the district (Taos, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, and Rio Arriba) voted to reauthorize the 0.125% sales tax that supports it by nearly a three-to-one margin. Also notable is the current "fare free" policy of riding the NCRTD "Blue Buses."

Intercity routes may not necessarily be limited to the public sector. Establishing a partnership with a private sector carrier may reduce the amount of red tape necessary to provide interstate services. The Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program is an example of such a partnership. Begun in 2007 following a series of cuts in Greyhound service, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) developed RFPs to identify for-profit operators for intercity routes. The network totals four lines, including two lines serving primarily rural cities (Ellensburg to Omak and Pasco to Walla Walla). The services are funded through section 5311 (f) with fares providing a local match. As a result, WSDOT primarily takes an administrative role in the system, coordinating central ticketing, branding, and planning.[6]

[6] https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/38B326F9-2E93-4F7C-B6F5-F8EF3CBB4E4E/0/TravelWashingtonIntercityBusProgrammap.pdf and https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/divisions/transportation/papercompetition/2015/Cox.pdf

Added or Expanded Transfer Stop Amenities

Figure 8 Existing Conditions at Farmington Walmart Transfer

Recently, the number of opportunities to transfer between services throughout the Four Corners has increased due to partnerships and schedule coordination. The Farmington Walmart transfer stop added in 2018 (for transfers between Navajo Transit and Red Apple Transit) is one example of a recent cross-agency partnership.

When developing a new transfer location or improving an existing stop, there are always questions to ask: Are these locations suitable for everybody? How do potential new customers get information? Given the natural climate in the Four Corners region, is the transfer point comfortable? Is it safe? Are there public restrooms nearby? Are the walking routes accessing the bus stop – in addition to the stop itself – compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

Amenities at transit stops, including benches, shelters, electronic information (showing upcoming arrival times), static information (with agency contact information, maps, and schedules), trash cans, and lighting at night, are all essential components of the transit experience, often as important as the ride itself.

Local jurisdictions typically construct bus stop amenities. In some instances, outdoor advertising companies will construct them. When determining where to place or enhance transfer stops, data, planning, coordination, and outreach are all factors in making the right choices. Bus operators, riders, and local planners are often the best resources.

Combining Package Delivery with Transit Service

According to a 2017 Texas Transportation Institute Study, "Package delivery can offer transit agencies the opportunity to provide an additional service to their customers and improve rural residents' accessibility to good and services." Revenues from package delivery can be help to sustain rural transit in the Four Corners as well. The study notes:

> *A successful rural package delivery program connects public transit agencies and private intercity bus carriers, especially when transferring packages from the main carrier (e.g., Greyhound Package Express, UPS, FedEx) to the last-mile carrier (e.g., transit agency). Collaboration and coordination with rural transit agencies and private package carriers can reinforce the first- and last-mile connection for package delivery. It is important to create central package drop-off and pickup locations that are convenient to both customers and package carriers. Integrating schedules and frequencies has the potential to increase both ridership and package delivery.*[7]

The Texas study includes surveys from numerous rural transportation entities, some of which are similar to those in Four Corners. With the ever increasing growth in package delivery, such partnerships are worth exploring further.

Implementing Flexible Transportation Vouchers

An effective mobility enhancement strategy, flexible transportation vouchers (flex vouchers) can fill an important gap for eligible individuals and provide additional revenues to transportation providers and even volunteer drivers. Some programs solely cover non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) while others also cover specific trip purposes.

Flex vouchers can be issued or sold to eligible individuals and used to purchase trips from public or private transportation providers, or to reimburse volunteer drivers. They may serve as a way to reduce the cost of current transportation programs and provide new service.

In 2013, the Bear River Association of Governments in Logan, UT started its flex voucher program to cover NEMT trips and then expanded the program in 2014 with a grant from the Utah Department of Workforce Services to cover trips related to:

- Employment/training activities
- Job search activities
- Educational activities (school or vocational training)
- Family/personal improvement activities (counseling, addiction intervention, support, mentoring, financial responsibility, etc.)

A single agency typically administers a flex voucher program to screen and approve applicants for eligibility, identify providers and partner organizations, provide the vouchers to participants, and reimburse providers.

Eligibility is based on age, disability, income criteria, or the need for a specific type of trip, such as employment transportation. Flex voucher programs that can potentially be used with any type of service and recognize family members as eligible providers of service, could fill temporal and

[7] Guidebook Using Public Transportation to Facilitate Last Mile Package Delivery, Texas Transportation Institute, 2017

geographic gaps in fixed-route and demand-response service for older adults and people with disabilities.

Voucher programs could also offer a means of employment transportation for individuals requiring access to jobs in areas not served by public transportation or during hours when those services are not in operation. Similar to other types of programs that provide subsidies to individuals rather than to transportation providers, flex voucher programs are consumer driven, and allow consumers to control resources directly and to make their own decisions about service providers. Other advantages include low start-up and administrative costs, support for existing transportation providers and services, and the flexibility to adapt to a variety of local conditions.

The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) has published guidance titled, Toolkit for Operating a Rural Transportation Voucher Program, 2017.[8] According to the report, APRIL worked with local Centers for Independent Living and Section 121 American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation programs to implement and demonstrate a traveler's check concept at 10 sites, including Zuni Entrepreneurial Enterprises, in Zuni, NM. Rather than providing transportation to people with disabilities, it provides resources and support to individuals and gives them the opportunity to use their creative talents and personal resources to achieve their own transportation goals.

The toolkit outlines the roles and responsibilities for the sponsoring agency, a community transportation coordinator, a bookkeeper, riders, and providers. Organizing a transportation interest network (TIN) of public, private, and political entities is a key first step. The recommendations are applicable to a broader flex voucher program. The mobility management group discussed in the next section could serve as a Four Corners TIN.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION SOLUTIONS

Mobility management at any level, whether regional, municipal, or tribal is complex. When resources are limited, travel options are few, and if a region is very large and rural, the challenges can appear overwhelming. Add four states, three FTA regions, and multiple tribal nations to the mix, and the challenges may seem insurmountable. But progress is possible and begins with collaboration, either with new partnerships or by reinforcing existing relationships. Whether collaboration is formal or informal, it works best when participation is as broad as possible.

A starting point in coordination begins with the cross-honoring of fares between systems. In Cottonwood, AZ, tickets between Cottonwood Area Transit and the commuter Verde Lynx line from Sedona are honored by Yavapai-Apache Nation (YAN) Transit Lines, and vice-versa. This program, in addition to the message sent by both transit lines that “everyone is welcome” on board, is a positive step in an inclusive and coordinated transit network.

Establishing coordination partnerships involves identifying stakeholders, defining barriers and opportunities to working together, outlining shared goals and visions, and sharing resources and responsibilities. Effective coordination among transit service providers, human service providers, nonprofit organizations, and private sector organizations can provide substantial benefits by combining duplicative services, combining facilities and funding opportunities, and leveraging skills and assets.

[8] http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/www/wp-content/uploads/TEXT-ONLY-complete-Transportation-Voucher-Toolkit.pdf

Leadership is an essential ingredient for successful coordination. Leadership doesn't have to come from the top to be effective and no single model of coordination is most appropriate. Effective outcomes are possible even without a full-fledged regional organization as long as the coordination involves regional stakeholders. This can take the form of advisory committees, interagency task forces, or less formal entities.

Ultimately, active organization and involvement across jurisdictional and institutional silos will be key to improvement in the region. As noted by a 2018 report on the region:

> **"The only way to successfully transition Farmington and the Four Corners area from a dependence on a fossil fuel economy is to explore and implement a wide range of economic development initiatives in coordination with each other."[9]**

Four Corners Mobility Management Group

One option for successful coordination is to establish a formal Four Corners mobility management organization that has a website, officers, and a board, and which meets periodically. At a minimum, this group would include all entities involved in coordinating and providing services. A couple of existing organizational models are the Bay Area (California) Mobility Management (http://mybamm.org) and the Mountain Ride Transportation Resource Center (www.mtnride.org). The Community Transportation Association of America (www.ctaa.org) is an excellent resource for establishing a Four Corners regional mobility management entity.

Given the size of the geographic area and the diversity of organizations involved, an interim strategy is to establish a member-only LinkedIn or Facebook group for peer-to-peer coordination. Examples of intergovernmental transportation coordination groups on LinkedIn include the Southeast Florida Transportation Council (www.seftc.org) and the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC), based in suburbs northwest of Boston.[10]

Whether formal or informal, a Four Corners mobility management group should include mobility managers, transportation and human service professionals, and providers. Once established, group members could share information, collaborate, and ultimately coordinate transportation. The group could also provide feedback to other agencies—including the four state DOTs—and potentially seek grant funding to support additional coordination efforts.

If the less formal model results in more communication, a potential next step is to organize a meeting or conference. This could even begin online with mobility managers giving periodic presentations. The ultimate goal would be to increase communication through a centralized and easily accessible forum.

Such a forum should be inclusive and ensure participation and hands-on involvement from the following parties:

- Tribal Nations
- State Departments of Transportation

[9] Public Land Solutions, "Review of Existing Economic Development Efforts," 2018 https://publiclandsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PLS-Four-Corners-Economic-Report-JK-121517.pdf

[10] See https://www.mapc.org/get-involved/subregions/magic/ and https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4025638/.

- A regional champion/organization representing the full area that is defined as the Four Corners
- Any other political and economic partners willing and interested in funding transportation capital improvements, operational expenses, and managing transportation revenues

Increased Peer-to-Peer Coordination

In such a vast geographic area with limited transportation connections, transit solutions that connect people to places will remain challenging. Matching drivers with riders is an effective and important resource for addressing mobility in the Four Corners region. Examples of peer coordination include ride matching and volunteer driver programs, discussed below.

Ride Matching Technology

One of the most significant evolutionary changes to improving personal mobility is access to the smartphone. And while not everyone has a phone or consistent wireless service, access to and use of smartphone services is increasing. Smartphone adoption has risen from 35 percent in 2011 to 77 percent in 2018. Among Americans aged 18-29, the rate is 94 percent and the rate among 30-49 year-olds, is 89 percent.[11] Transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft, and other "micro mobility" solutions have dramatically altered mobility in urban areas. However, very few locations in the Four Corners have benefited from the ability to use TNCs.

Looking ahead, as smartphone adoption expands and service quality improves in rural areas, the potential exists for using technology for ride matching. At present, smartphone applications such as Waze Carpool match drivers and riders for commute trips, typically in large metropolitan areas; however, there may be applications in rural/regional areas. Other applications that may be usable anywhere could be in development. Ideally, an application would function similar to an old fashioned ride board, where someone posts a need for a ride on a specific date and time to a common location. These often work best when both parties are making a round trip, particularly when there are no transit options available for the rider.

At a minimum, it is advisable to keep track of developments in technology as they can serve as brokers of rides. If suitable applications become available, mobility managers can promote them as part of marketing and education efforts.

Expanded Volunteer Driver Programs

Volunteer driver programs currently exist in Farmington, Flagstaff, and Window Rock. Continuation and expansion of volunteer driving is an important resource for matching drivers with riders. According to the National Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP), "More and more transit systems are looking to volunteers to help meet the transportation needs of their communities." The November 2018 report, an update of a report from 2000, lists advantages and disadvantages of such programs. Advantages include more flexibility in rural areas for trip coordination and booking than a traditional transit system, though it is sometimes difficult to find individuals who wish to be volunteer drivers. In the Four Corners region, however, a volunteer driver program may work well for those wishing to cross state boundaries for various services.

[11] http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/

MARKETING AND EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Distributed Transportation Guides

Current and potential users of the transportation system in the Four Corners require knowledge about the existing service available to them. Important information includes span of service, locations served, fares, contact information, and accommodations for senior citizens, people with disabilities, veterans, students, and other populations with special needs.

Information about transportation service ultimately depends on each individual agency's willingness to post and share that information. Information about coordination between two services or providers depends on partnerships and a deliberate intent to distribute information. If information about a given transit service is not widely distributed, the user base of that will be limited to the people who are already aware. This comes to the detriment of attracting new riders and the service building new fare revenue.

Therefore, with the intent of advancing the degree of coordination, this plan includes a listing of region-wide transit service (See Appendix).

It is most imperative that the guide is placed in the hands of those who are at the front line of distributing information, namely:

- Every dispatch operator serving the Four Corners region
- Every person who answers the phone lines of a transit agency, a 2-1-1 call center, or transportation program

Figure 9 Example Transportation Guide for Durango Transit Center

WELCOME TO THE DURANGO TRANSIT CENTER

250 W. 8th Street Durango, CO 81301

FOUR CORNERS TRANSIT SERVICES

Transit Services from this Station

Destination	Service / Route	Important Info
GRAND JUNCTION (Via Mancos, Cortez, Dolores, Telluride, Montrose)	BUSTANG OUTRIDER	Depart: 6:30 AM Arrive: 7:10 PM 7 Days a Week
MAIN AVENUE & S ANIMAS VIEW DRIVE	DURANGO TRANSIT ROUTE 1	Departures out of Gate 1 Every 30 minutes 7:00 AM – 8:40 PM 7 Days a Week
TAMARIN SQUARE	DURANGO TRANSIT ROUTE 2	Departures out of Gate 2 Every 30 minutes 7:00 AM – 8:30 PM 7 Days a Week
NATURE'S OASIS MARKET (Via Santa Rita Park, Social Security, Walmart)	DURANGO TRANSIT ROUTE 3	Departures out of Gate 3 Every 30 minutes 7:00 AM – 8:30 PM 7 Days a Week
BAYFIELD	ROAD RUNNER TRANSIT	Depart: 7:48 AM, 9:45 AM, and 5:28 PM Weekdays Only
IGNACIO	ROAD RUNNER TRANSIT	Depart: 7:08 AM, 10:08 AM, 1:08 PM, 3:35 PM, 6:03 PM Weekdays Only

Contact Info

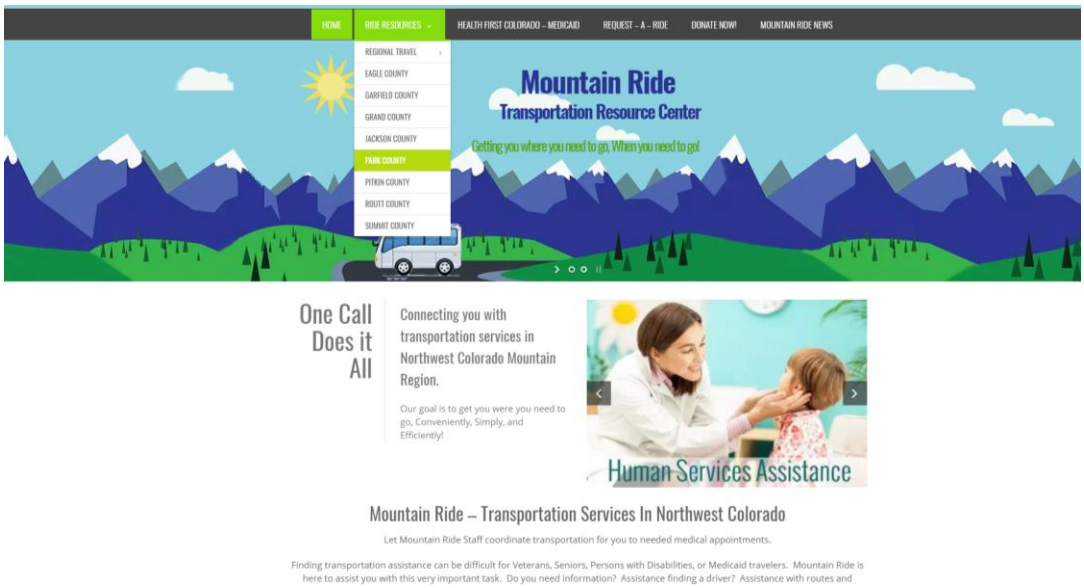
Name	Phone #	Important Info
Police/Fire/Ambulance	911	Emergencies Only!
Bustang Outrider	970-563-4555	https://ridebustang.com/schedules/
Road Runner Transit	970-563-4545	http://sococaa.org/road-runner-transit/
Durango Transit ADA Bus Dispatch	970-247-3577	For ADA-Eligible Rides Only
Durango Transit Main Line	970-259-5438	www.durangotransit.com
Durango Cab	970-259-4818	Serving a 100-mile radius
Buckhorn Limousine	970-769-0933	
Animas Transportation	970-259-1315	
Cortez Cab	970-560-4884	Connections to Cortez

These contacts are provided as a convenience; they do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by the Four Corners Mobility Management Group. *Revised: December 2018 (Please call to confirm information).*

Continued Incremental Rollout of One-Call, One-Click

The one-call, one-click resources in the Four Corners generally end at state boundaries, or are limited to the smaller sub-regions surrounding the area's largest cities (e.g., Farmington) and/or reservations (e.g., Navajo). However, there are advantages to continuing to pool together resources.

Figure 10 Screenshot of Mountain Ride Transportation Resource Center Website



By pooling together foundation and agency resources across seven counties, the Mountain Ride Transportation Resource Center is allowed to scale up and provide consolidated information on public transportation options, broker/dispatch rides for Medicaid transportation, and coordinate and refer transit services for populations with special needs. More pertinent to the needs of the Four Corners, however, is the Resource Center's website, which lists out a "how-to-ride" guide, fixed-route services, demand-response services, volunteer driver programs, human services, and other options for each county.

The management of such a consolidated resource could be the first formal step of a Four Corners Mobility Management Group. Providers would register with the webmaster (sometimes provided and financed by a third-party mobility platform such as RideAmigos or RideShark) to ensure information is easily updated.

CONCLUSION

The road to an advanced, seamless, and coordinated intercity mass transportation network in the Four Corners region will be a long one. In the meantime, there are many strategies that SWCCOG, and other leaders in the Four Corners region, can undertake to ensure the people of the Four Corners region with the greatest needs have access to the currently available fleet of transit vehicles, have a willing and able network of drivers, and that providers in the Four Corners region have the resources to become brokers and providers of ongoing demand in transportation.

Strategies will require heavy lifting and inclusive discussions. The following summary assessments should be considered a road map for coordination in Four Corners transit going

forward. Each strategy is assessed on a gradient of their precedence in past plans, potential impacts in the Four Corners region, and realization of plan goals. Furthermore, each strategy's necessary investments, partnerships, funders, and leaders are outlined as a means to implement these strategies.

Figure 11 Summary Assessment of Alternate Solutions – Goals and Objectives

Strategy	Recommended in Other Plans				Supporting Communities?	Increased Service?	Increased Awareness & Satisfaction?	Improved Partnerships in the Four Corners?
	AZ	CO	NM	UT				
Continued Investment in Regional/Intercity Trunk Services		●	●		Medium	High	Medium	High
Improved Transfer Stops With Useful Amenities					High	Low	High	Medium
Combined Package Delivery with Transit Service					Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Establishment of Four Corners Mobility Management Group	●	●			Medium	Low	Medium	High
Ride Matching Technology		●			Low	Medium	Medium	Low
Expanded Volunteer Driver Programs					High	Medium	Low	Medium
Distributed Transportation Guides	●				High	Low	High	Medium
Continued Incremental Rollout of One-Call, One-Click	●	●	●	●	High	Low	High	Medium

Figure 12 Summary Assessment of Alternate Solutions – Implementation Estimates

Strategy	Suggested Performance Measures	Upfront Cost Estimate ($, $$, $$$)	Ongoing Cost Estimate ($, $$, $$$)	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline	Responsible Agencies
Continued Investment in Regional/Intercity Trunk Services	Ridership by Line, Customer Satisfaction	$$$	$$$	State, Private	Medium-Term	State DOTs, Host Cities
Improved Transfer Stops With Useful Amenities	Ridership by Stop	$	$	City, Private, Agencies	Short-Term	Host Cities
Combined Package Delivery with Transit Service	Number of new services delivering packages	$	$	Logistics companies	Short-Term	Transit Providers
Establishment of Four Corners Mobility Management Group	Members enrolled, number of posts to collaboration site, webinars held, rides coordinated	$	$	N/A	Short-Term	COG, Transit Providers
Increased Ride Matching Technology	New applications available, rides coordinated	$	$	Private	Medium-Term	COG, Cities
Expanded Volunteer Driver Programs	Volunteers, rides	$	$	Private, COG, Cities	Short-Term	COG, Cities
Distributed Transportation Guides	Number of distributed guides, Number of inquiries made directly due to listings in guides	$$	$	COG	Short-Term	COG, Mobility Management Group
Continued Incremental Rollout of One-Call, One-Click	Participating states	$	$$	State	Medium-Term	States, Mobility Management Group

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