



The mission of the South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) is to strengthen communities, facilitate economic and educational activities, and promote health and safety through safe and efficient regional transportation services.

**Board Members**

**Javier Perea**

RTD Chair

Mayor, City of Sunland Park

**Nora Barraza**

Mayor, Town of Mesilla

RTD Vice Chair

**Diana Trujillo**

Treasurer

Mayor, City of Anthony

**Yvonne Flores**

Secretary

Las Cruces City Councilor

**Cathy Harmon**

City of Elephant Butte

**Lynn Ellins**

Dona Ana County Commissioner

**James "Slim" Whitlock**

Trustee, Village of Hatch

**Majorie Powey**

Trustee, Village of Williamsburg

**Sharon Thomas**

Citizens Advisory Committee

**David Armijo**

Executive Director

**South Central Regional Transit District  
Board Meeting Agenda**

Dona Ana Government Center

Commission Chambers

**Revised Agenda**

**October 27, 2021**

**1:30 p.m.**

**Call To Order**

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Changes to the agenda
4. Public Input
5. Changes to the Agenda
6. Approval of SCRTD Meeting Minutes of September 22, 2021
7. Executive Director's Report – David Armijo
8. Discussion and Action items:
  - a. Approve FY2021-22 First Quarter Financials – Shea
  - b. Approve Budget Adjustment to FY2021-22 Budget - Shea
  - c. Discuss Challenges Facing District Recruitment - Armijo
  - d. Discuss El Paso MPO & Sun Metro actions regarding Section 5307 and 5339 Funding for SCRTD - Armijo
9. Board Comments
10. Adjourn - **Next Meeting October 27, 2021**

If you are an individual with a disability in need of a reader, amplifier, qualified Sign Language interpreter, or any other form of auxiliary aid or service to attend or participate in the hearing of the meeting, please contact SCRTD at (575) 323-1620 at least one week prior to the meeting, or as soon as possible. Public documents, including the agenda and minutes, can be provided in various accessible formats.

SCRTD Board Meetings are held in person and virtually on the fourth Wednesday of the month in the Dona Ana County Government Center located at 845 N. Motel Blvd., Las Cruces, NM 88007. The meeting can be accessed virtually via WebEx at the following:

**BOCC Chambers is inviting you to a scheduled WebEx meeting.**

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

1:30 PM | (UTC-06:00) Mountain Time (US & Canada) | 2 hrs.

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**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6:  
MINUTES**

**South Central RTD  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday,  
September 22, 2021 - 1:30 PM  
Dona Ana County Government Center  
845 N. Motel Blvd., Las Cruces, NM 88007**

**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Javier Perea, RTD Chair, City of Sunland Park  
Nora Barraza, RTD Vice Chair, Town of Mesilla  
Majorie Powey, Village of Williamsburg  
Diana Trujillo, City of Anthony  
Cathy Harmon, City of Elephant Butte  
Yvonne Flores, City of Las Cruces

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Lynn Ellins, Doña Ana County  
James "Slim" Whitlock, Village of Hatch  
Sharon Thomas, Citizens Advisory Committee

**SCRTD STAFF:**

David Armijo, SCRTD Executive Director  
Sara Vasquez, SCRTD  
Adam Shea, SCRTD

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Becky Baum, RC Creations, LLC, Transcriptionist

Javier Perea called the meeting to order at 1:33.

**1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

ALL STAND FOR THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

**2. ROLL CALL**

A quorum was determined to be present.

**3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda. Motioned by Yvonne Flores, second by Nora Barraza.  
Passed unanimously.

**4. PUBLIC INPUT**

There was none.

**5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Handled via agenda item three.**

**6. APPROVAL OF SCRTD MEETING MINUTES OF August 25, 2021**

There were no changes to the minutes. Motioned by Nora Barraza, seconded by Cathy Harmon. Passed, with abstention by Yvonne Flores.

**7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

David Armijo gave the Executive Director's report including fiscal year ridership, capital grants to acquire some additional funds, Sunland Park facility, and school bus service.

There were 6,458 for ridership for the fiscal year. Aggregate ridership numbers were shown for the five years that included federal funding. The 44,543 in 2019 included the migrant movement. In 2020 the ridership is half due to the pandemic. Beginning fiscal year 2021 which is October 2020, the ridership went up dramatically due to the addition of the Sunland Park service. The last six months has been trending over 6,000 rides a month. Total of 64,948 for present fiscal year and most is coming from the Yellow Route, two additional hybrid electric buses added, additional hybrid route/flex service with paratransit for a few months in the eastern part of the county, with continued flex service; Doña Ana, coming in Mayfield along Valley to the Transit Center downtown and then into Mesilla. Hope with Mesilla is to bring the Green Route from university and make that connection, giving a full loop through town. There is expectation of 10-12% increase ridership with the opening of the US/Mexico border. They are revising the route to run regular service to the casino without a transfer, which will go into service in the next three weeks. Hopefully in the next year will be 75,000 for ridership and then over the next two to three years could see 100,000 rides a year. Majorie Powey asked about advertising on the buses for the vaccine and where people can get it, as a problem is not having a computer, going to get a vaccine gets confusing. David Armijo stated last year they were that were provided by Doña Ana County. He stated they can redo all of those again. Yvonne Flores stated information and locations are not consistent on where, when, and how to get the vaccines and testing of COVID. David Armijo will check with the county.

David Armijo got a call from the state two days ago, about \$450 million is available for transit for the state to apply on behalf of the SCRTD and have asked what we need. In looking at the 10-year plan, optimal level identifies seven buses that should be replaced in the next two years. There are three buses on order now to replace the buses from Albuquerque. He is asking for one replacement, and one expansion to be used in Sierra County. He is going to request this week to the state for three vehicles and the replacement, knowing it could take a year. This would put the SCRTD on track otherwise having to look for other funds. Yvonne Flores asked if they were electric buses. Before the pandemic RTD received midsize buses for \$98,000.00, the current buses on order are \$135,000.00 each. The ADA lift is being replaced with a ramp, can electronically and manually be used. To make this bus a hybrid adds \$35,000.00 to the cost. A full electric bus would change the dynamic as the buses the City is getting are \$800,000.00 and need a facility and need some place to plug. SCRTD does not have the facility or plug ins to accommodate full electric yet. The buses are for 10 years for a midsize. The larger buses, 35-feet, are 15 years.

The Sunland Park facility that is currently being rented was shown. They have a three year lease, and in the second year of that lease at \$2,500.00 per month. The facility is great and at the end of the routes for City Hall and El Paso Downtown and throughout Sunland Park. Not being able to work out a long-term arrangement is problematic. There are some opportunities for funding at the state level to go in a joint development with the City of Sunland Park. Half the seven acres of property is heavily paved, and half is still undeveloped. Doing something joint would save SCRTD \$30,000.00 or more a year in leasing of that property. Right now, it is \$30,000.00 for lease, plus utilities, security, etc., and owning is usually cheaper. At current, the value of that property is unknown, but he is working on it. Nora Barraza asked if the Anthony facility was no longer feasible. David stated that with over 13,000 square miles of service area there will need to be spaces along the way and this one work well for the southern area. Anthony works for Anthony and Chaparral and good jump off into Las Cruces. Currently three buses are parked in Las Cruces. At some point as the SCRTD grows to the north they will another facility. The other problem with just one facility is long distance for service. Javier Perea stated that the State currently has money for shovel ready projects and this joint project works well with the City of Sunland Park and the SCRTD.

Lastly is school bus service, Las Cruces, Gadsden, Hatch, Doña Ana County Community College, and New Mexico State University. There is a lot of activity, and another reason ridership is up. On average 1,000 or more trips a month are just students. There is some midday shuttle service for the students. And things are more normalized compared to last year with the loss of that 12,000 ridership.

## **8. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS:**

### **a. Fill Vice-Chair position**

Councilor Gerald Lafont's retirement left this vacancy. This would be just for the remainder of the term which is until January. Yvonne Flores nominated Nora Barraza. Motioned by Diana Trujillo, second by Majorie Powey. Passed unanimously.

### **b. Approve Resolution and Chairman's Letter for FY2023 Section 5311 Rural Grant, NMDOT**

David Armijo stated each year a grant application is brought forward and requires a letter of interest. And now the State wants a letter that is specific to the resolution, so a letter will follow today from Chair Perea. On page 10 of the resolution, the District is requesting \$1,609,024.97 in section 5311 Rural Transit Funding for Fiscal Year 2023. This grant application that will be reviewed by the regional planning organization this winter, it will come back to be awarded in June 2022, and the funds would begin in October 2022 through September 2023. The second key point will reflect the District commits to \$610,187.00 in local funding. The grant application is in the Board's packets. On the second page are the various budget categories, and on the left hand side under net project cost there is the \$1.6 million that was just referenced and the federal funding for the grant is \$998,839.15 and the minimum required match is the \$610,185.00. That is coming from administration 20%, capital 80/20 \$82,000.00, and operating is 50/50 split \$400,000.00 of operating and we have to match that. The membership fees and local grant from the MOU with the County is where these funds come from. County right now is \$628,000.00, and members funding is \$100,000.00. Most of the County funds will go to match these grants. Last year SCRTD received \$1.1 million. What is included this

year is money for bus, vehicles, etc., but most of it is bus services. Need a minimum of \$135,000.00 or more in order to run service into Sierra County. The grant is based on administrative costs, how efficient SCRTD is, look at ridership, overall budget. The funding SCRTD receives is low compared to the size of the area covered in service.

Nora Barraza asked if the application had been submitted. It has been submitted but will not be considered until today's actions on this resolution. It will be subject to prioritization of the region when SCRTD goes before the RPO in Sierra County sometime in November or December. Nora Barraza asked if the County's membership fees were set for other projects/grants as our portion. David Armijo stated not for the Fiscal Year 2023. This is priority and all else will follow depending on this. Nora Barraza also asked what is going to be done to make up the \$610,000.00 in other revenue sources so the SCRTD is not out that membership money with the day-to-day operations and other grants or funding sources. How much will this tie the RTD up and for what else to apply monies? David Armijo stated for Fiscal Year 2023 there are no other obligations. They will begin discussion of the Fiscal Year 2023 period in February/March. And at that point time there will be another issue of the 5307 and how that works. As soon as that is resolved hopefully in 30-45 days, they will need to return to the Board in this fiscal year to adjust the budget with the new funds. That will affect financially where they will be next February/March as that funding source is an annual allocation that goes on forever. This current funding is subject to approval by the State and the Regional Planning Organization every year.

Motioned by Nora Barraza, second by Yvonne Flores. Passed unanimously.

**c. Fuel Use Forecast**

Adam Shea discussed the fuel uses and costs of Fiscal Year 2021 which ended June 30, 2021. A graph showing the increase in ridership for the year and also a graph showing the number of gallons for the particular month and has increased by 80%. Hybrid buses do have larger fuel tanks. The next graph shows dollar per gallon and since July 2020 to June 2021 the price per gallon increased 44%. The current budget included needing more money for the fuel usage. In June 2021, the price was \$3.03, August \$3.11, continues to increase. Total miles driven is an increase of 43% from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

Nora Barraza asked for the extra events, such as the Hatch Chili Festival, if that is being charged. Adam Shea stated they cannot charge due to the Charter. If it is for educational purposes and from a member district, we can provide that service for a day or two. It is rare when the SCRTD does an extra event, which sometimes also includes some good public relations. Question of what is the difference between transporting migrants and the Chili Festival? David Armijo stated the migrants was an emergency request from the County and then as it continued funding was done through an MOU. Nora Barraza believes that in the future the budget should include additional funding for circumstances of picking up two to three big projects during the year, so to not to have to add to the fuel charge.

**d. Update on FY2022 Section 5307 and Section 5339, FTA Grant Application and Sun Metro Split Letter**

David Armijo stated there have been many discussions over the last few months. The El Paso MPO staff presented a presentation on what they think will go to SCRTD for the region and how much to El Paso County. El Paso County provides service to Canutillo, Fabens, etc. and is all part of the El Paso MPO area. They get a million a year from the base fund from Sun Metro. Our numbers are currently at \$631,000.00. We have an idea and a general agreement with the planners at El Paso MPO, we do not have an agreement yet with Sun Metro. As a regional effort it is up to Sun Metro to agree to what we want which is a split letter to apply for those funds. In the discussion with the executive committee, Ellen Smythe is not supportive of SCRTD as she is concerned with her budget. \$1.5 million would go to SCRTD instead of Sun Metro. The federal guidelines are based on population and actual ridership, population of Doña Ana County, Anthony, Chaparral, Sunland Park, Santa Teresa have not been receiving these funds for the last eight years. We are trying to get our funds in and go forward. By the time Sun Metro has taken action and then comes back in the first meeting in November to the El Paso MPO there should be an agreement in place to allow SCRTD to go forward with a split letter agreement. Adam will be submitting a grant application to the Ft. Worth office by the end of the year, around November. This will include a lot more auditing and other processes. Hopefully after the first of the year be able to access some of these funds. Secondly, those funds do not yet exist in the budget, has not been approved by the Board, and right now just conceptual item. Over the next two months move from concept to actual before we apply. However, 5339 and 5307 are capital projects so right now getting another \$600,000.00 is not what is needed, operating is needed. Federal guidelines allow swap capital for operating in the year you get the funds, to be done for maintenance and for paratransit. We are not doing paratransit. But maintenance can be labor for mechanics, leasing of the facility, security for the facility, contracts for those items. Adam already has a line item for this, percentage of insurance pay for the vehicles, etc. Hopefully capture about \$200,000.00 or more for the facility down south and the operating staff there, reducing the capital grant by a third, which is for existing services.

Yvonne Flores stated there were some monies should have come to us in the past. David Armijo stated that is second tier. There is about \$9,000.00 specifically earmarked to SCRTD, but still under the auspices of Sun Metro. And so SCRTD will be going after that money. Currently everything from 2020 and 2021 is federally frozen due to the pandemic, all numbers were down. But ridership goes down, but population stays the same, and you get more money for population as it is still a pool of money.

## **9. BOARD COMMENT**

Yvonne Flores thanked David Armijo for the hard work, the Chairperson, and Nora Barraza for being Vice-Chair. Nora Barraza thanked for the support and confidence from the Board Members.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT - Next meeting October 27, 2021**

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Chairperson

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 7:**

### **Executive Director Report – Oral Presentation**

A report will be provided at the meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October. The report will include an update on ridership and preparations for acquisition of capital items for the new fiscal year beginning in October 2021.

### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

None

### **SUPPORT INFORMATION:**

None

### **DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:**

Item to be reported during the Transit Board meeting.

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8:**

- a.** Approve FY2021-22 First Quarter Financials.

Both a written and oral report will be provided that outline the first three months of expenditures and revenues. The District is running at 23.5 percent of cost or 1.5 percent below budget. The contributing factors are labor and benefits which are running below budget. Unfortunately, fuel costs which were increased from last budget year are running above budget and if they remain unabated will require added funds to balance the budget.

District staff are deferring some hiring and other expenses to remain within budget, primarily to offset higher fuel costs.

### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

Yes.

### **SUPPORT INFORMATION:**

First Quarter Financials Report provided.

### **DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:**

Item to be reported during the Board meeting. Resolution provided for consideration.



**South Central Regional Transit District**

**Resolution Number: FY22-08**

**A Resolution approving the First Quarter Financial Statements from July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

**WHEREAS**, the South Central Regional Transit District Board of Directors met in a meeting Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, in the Dona Ana County Offices, 845 N. Motel Blvd., Las Cruces, N.M.; and,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Directors of the South- Central Regional Transit District does hereby approve the First Quarter Financial Statements from July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**ADOPTED AND APPROVED THE 27<sup>th</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER 2021.**

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Javier Perea, SCRTRD Board Chair

ATTEST:

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David Armijo, Executive Director

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8:**

### **b. Approve Budget Adjustment to FY2021-22 Budget**

District staff are requesting budget approval to modify specific line items that were originally programmed in the development of the budget in the spring of 2021. Some of these items due to circumstances are either no longer needed or not at the funding level original proposed. Finance staff will explain the reasoning for the change. The most significant item is fuel expense. Per last months presentation by Adam Shea, the cost of fuel has risen in the past year and in anticipation the District added funds to this line item. Unfortunately, cost continue to rise and may exceed the funds programmed.

Consequently, added funds are now recommended. Additional items will be discussed and presented at the Board Meeting.

### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

Yes.

### **SUPPORT INFORMATION:**

First Quarter Financial Report is provided in the Agenda Package for review.

### **DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:**

Item to be reported during the Board meeting. A Resolution approving the budget adjustment is listed for consideration.

**South Central Regional Transit District**

**Resolution Number: FY22-09**

**A Resolution approving an amendment to the FY2021-2022 Financial Statements and Budget as of October 2021.**

**WHEREAS**, the South Central Regional Transit District Board of Directors met in a meeting Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, in the Dona Ana County Offices, 845 N. Motel Blvd., Las Cruces, N.M.; and,

**WHERAS**, Staff provided details on amending the annual budget to better reflect the budget categories in the annual budget; and,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Directors of the South-Central Regional Transit District does hereby approve the Financial Statements and Budget as of October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**ADOPTED AND APPROVED THE 27<sup>th</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER 2021.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Javier Perea, SCRTD Board Chair

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Armijo, Executive Director

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8:**

### **c. Discuss Challenges Facing District Recruitment**

The District is facing a growing list of challenges regarding its recruitment of personnel. More specifically hiring bus drivers and mechanics or maintenance technicians. The challenges include starting wages, required state and federal certifications for bus drivers, e.g., Commercial Driver's license and the backup at the DMV office to schedule these certifications is more than a month. Additionally, absenteeism during the pandemic has risen. In anticipating of this matter, we requested two additional bus drivers to serve as extra board drivers that would be scheduled to cover open routes during periods when other drivers are off work. Unfortunately, we have not been able to add sufficient number of operators to meet this need.

Further regionally and statewide we are seeing other transit operators increase the starting wage or issue signing bonuses to attract operators. We are evaluating this element to see what we may need to do in the future. A local example, the City of Las Cruces, RoadRunner raised the starting salary of a bus driver from \$13.40 to \$15.51. This action came as a result of the transit system inability to hire sufficient personnel to meet all of the demand for transit service. Service remains on a limited service schedule.

In our experience, recent recruitments have resulted in more than half of the candidates not showing up or lacking in their Commercial Driver's License requirements. Consequently, the District has not been able to hire a sufficient number of drivers to meet our needs. If this dilemma continues it may be necessary to cut bus service. Staff is evaluating hiring and training bus drivers; however, this may be problematic since the drivers once trained would need to wait weeks to take their exams to be a certified CDL driver.

However, an alternative would be to review the thirty-six month hiring progression, e.g., \$13.40 to start progressing to \$14.00 the \$15.00 and finally \$15.50 an hour and consider compressing it to twenty-four months while raising the start to \$14.00 per hour. It is unclear whether or not this initiative would be sufficient to offset a higher starting wage of \$15.51 as is the case in Las Cruces. The District is using dispatchers and its transit supervisor to drive open runs. However, this is not sustainable.

### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

None.

### **SUPPORT INFORMATION:**

None.

## **DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:**

Item to be reported during the Board meeting.

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8:**

### **d. Discuss El Paso MPO & Sun Metro scheduled actions in November 2021 regarding Section 5307 and 5339 Funding, Split Letter and Service Expansion Policy**

District staff have been in communication with El Paso MPO in regard to developing a process whereby the District can apply for Section 5307 and 5339 federal funds for FY2022. The new fiscal year begins on October 1<sup>st</sup>. In conjunction a central element to receive regional funding, Sun Metro is proposing a Service Expansion Policy that will require the SCRTD to develop a Transportation Development Plan (TDP) that meets requirements set forth by Sun Metro and subject to the City of El Paso governing board approval on an annual basis. The TDP is similar in form to that of the District's ten year plan but is more specific to the service within the southern portion of the Dona Ana County service area that includes the cities of Anthony and Sunland Park. It will take several months to develop the plan for review and approval by Sun Metro.

In the interim, the plan is for Sun Metro to provide the District with a waiver of the Service Expansion Policy for Fiscal Year 2022 and to authorize the release of a split letter that will authorize South Central RTD to apply for funding. Once in place, SCRTD can apply for funds through the FTA regional office in Fort Worth, Texas. The District would become a Direct Recipient and could apply for a specific amount of funds for the fiscal year. The MPO estimates that the District qualifies for \$551,000 in Section 5307 Urban funds in Fiscal Year 2022. Further discussion is pending on the District qualifications and funding for Section 5339 Bus Capital. Funding for Section 5339 Bus Capital is estimated to be over \$80,000 annually. More details to follow once these discussions have concluded.

## **ACTION REQUESTED:**

No.

## **SUPPORT INFORMATION:**

None.

## **DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:**

Item to be reported during the Board meeting.