

**South Central RTD
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday,
March 23, 2022 - 1:30 PM**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Peter Atencio, Village of Hatch
Sharon Thomas, Citizens Advisory Committee

SCRTD STAFF:

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

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

Javier Perea called the meeting to order at approximately 1:45.

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 Councilor Flores, second by Nora Barraza. Passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Raymond Madsen stated that he's been attempting to be environmentally conscious and save money by using the county and Las Cruces municipal buses.

For three times the route was completely canceled and he wasn't informed until he called in; the Copper Route is the least conspicuous. The signs are up on the Copper Route but that bus is taken to service other routes going down to Anthony and Sunland Park. When he has tried to address with employees they seem to be condescending and patronizing to him. He added that it's difficult for him to attend the meetings virtually but is unable to attend in person as they moved the space. He believes this needs to be addressed in order to continue having people from Sierra and Otero County supporting the agency.

Gabriel Holguin, a trustee with the City of Anthony introduced himself. He will touch base with the Board soon to gather information on how they're involved in the community. This Board is one of the first in Anthony and he's excited to be a part of it.

5. APPROVAL OF SCRTD MEETING MINUTES OF January 26, 2022

There were no changes to the minutes. Motioned by Councilor Flores, seconded by Nora Barraza. Passed unanimously; one abstain by Harmon.

6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

David Armijo gave the Executive Director's report. Ridership for March is holding steady; they are a bit higher than for February. The state report since July was shown; roughly 46,000 with just under 65,000 last year. SCRTD is on track to do close to 70,000; Mr. Armijo expects 6,000 per month during the next few months. Currently most agencies are running roughly 60% to 65%; many cases services have been shut down. Locally the Sun Metro doesn't run service on holidays or Sundays, a significant reduction. Roadrunner is still running a 10 hour service day. There have been vehicle issues; vehicles are getting older and it's difficult to replace. SCRTD hasn't received a bus in over two years. The orders with the state are two years behind and going into the third year; the order should be in this summer but it's unknown.

The van program included two vans which received \$90,000 from last year's legislature; those are still on order. Mr. Armijo went to California to buy one and it should be delivered this afternoon. He went to California due to sales tax; California wouldn't allow him to drive the vehicle which is why it is on a flatbed to be delivered. There are difficulties receiving supplies and parts as well. There was discussion on the factors attributing to the backlog; COVID, shut down of the Gillig bus factory, computer chips, pent up demand, and etcetera. SCRTD has five buses they're waiting on; have used a van to help move people, especially on Copper Route. A 15 passenger van was just acquired; no wheelchair access but can be used on an occasional basis as a backup. This van will be used with the vanpool program with Santa Teresa; had to be paid upfront.

Pictures were shown of the new bus stops, Cooper Route and Turquoise Route. The signs are built locally and the poles were acquired from the same builder the City uses. There is an order for five buses which should get in later this year: only replacement buses rather than expansion. There is a factory that produces something called diamond buses whose factory is in Kansas. SCRTD is on a list to pick up two vehicles from them; small vehicles normally used for paratransit 14 passenger vans. If the financials are worked out this week then those can be picked up within two to three weeks. Currently the quest is to get everything they can so there isn't a backlog again; new buses, used buses to recover, and etcetera. Two more mechanics were hired as well.

The state contacted Mr. Armijo in regards to buses; in particular a 2015 International bus, 40 feet long, and has been parked for almost five years due to the pandemic, special driver, and other issues. It is practically brand new and the state is giving it to SCRTD. There will be limitations to what it can be used for; possibly Yellow Route because it's the most popular route. It will be in service by the end of the week. Mr. Armijo will send the slides to the Board for further viewing.

7. ACTION ITEM: FY2022 AUDITORS REPORT - ITZA SOSA

Itza Sosa from Beasley Mitchell gave the presentation. The audit was approved and released by the state on March 8, 2022. The copy provided to the Board is a final version of the audit report. She thanked Adam, Sara, and David for their hard work and timeliness in providing all necessary information for the audit; they were able to submit on time.

The scope of the audit was from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. The responsibility as the auditor is to audit the financial statement information and provide an opinion as to whether the financial statements are presented fairly based on their test and audit procedures. Management of the district is responsible for the financial information presented in their financial statements for the design and implementation of internal controls and providing all requested information related to the audit. The district received an unmodified opinion which is a clean opinion; the best opinion to get. There is one finding but it is not significant enough to qualify the report.

A single audit was performed for the current year; it is necessary when the district has federal award expenditures exceeding \$750,000. This year the threshold was exceeded and there was a need for a single audit. Auditors are mainly focused on testing the federal spending. The district did not receive any findings related to the single audit and therefore also received an unmodified opinion for that portion. For the single audit portion it is very important that the district can account for federal and state funds separately. On page 43 of the report there is a summary of the prior and current year findings. Four of the findings received in the prior year were marked as resolved. The current year only has one finding related to the budget; the district did not include budget for capital purchases on the DFA report. The

revenue side of the budget was included; grant was included under the budget but not on the expense side for DFA reporting. The finding will be simple to clear for next year.

Motioned by Mayor Murillo, seconded by Councilor Flores.

Councilor Flores asked if the page nine finding was it; yes it is for the current year. The expenditure could be seen for the buses but it wasn't budgeted; it needs to be for DFA purposes. It cannot be fixed at this time as too much time has passed. However Ms. Sosa will look at fiscal year 2022 information to clear the finding. As long as the trial balance and accounting records match the DFA report and the budget is there for all expenses then it will clear the finding. Chair Perea congratulated the staff for the improvement on the audit.

Passed unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION ITEM: FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET APPROVAL STATE OF NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

David Armijo gave the presentation. He had intended to do this in January as the letter was received in December. It takes several months for DFA to clear the items; Adam has made adjustments to the budget relative to the quarterly. Staff is confident that things will be fine when the books are closed. This discussion is to make sure the Board has an opportunity to see the letter.

9. DISCUSSION ITEM: BUDGET WORKSHOP

David Armijo gave the presentation. When the pandemic first hit in 2020 service was reduced by roughly 15%; school trips mostly. The baseline was still going strong and they prepared for the new Yellow Route services end of 2020. Fares was reinstated last year to bring in revenues. When services came back they were able to increase service 118%. During that time emergency services were also provided to migrants. El Calvario has begun using their own buses so SCRTD helps as needed now. The transportation of food boxes into Sierra County was done in 2020 and 2021; recently been cut back due to their own resources and people being able to do more.

A grant was received for two vans of roughly \$90,000; the school bus services were reinstated; money from 5307 funding was received; other funds were received; the county increased funding to \$711,000; phase two of the Anthony bus facility was completed; a new payroll system was added; training program was expanded for a more defined program; new bus stops were installed; there is a bus review of the Sierra County routes for expansions of possible Red, Purple, Turquoise, and Sierra County routes. SCRTD has continued to grow from six employees to 30 employees; the most recent addition is an administrative assistant named Christina Gamboa. Within the past three years there was only one

administrative person added; mechanics and dispatchers were hired instead to help services.

There have been security challenges in Sunland Park; lighting and other measures have been added for safety. ARBOC vehicles are on order; no wheelchair lift as it has a ramp and is wider which makes it easier to board. Mr. Armijo is looking into hybrid and electric vehicles; there is a midsize bus that's being tested in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Once the vehicle is certified then the manufacturer can move forward. These will be the first all-electric midsize bus which opens the door in future years. Mr. Armijo is working on a policy talking about zero emission which is a year or two away. Goals and objectives include bus capital, securing more federal funds, launch a regional van pool program, and develop and implement a new fare policy. The county is considering subsidizing the fare box which would allow SCRTD to go to a free fare system; just shy of \$4,000 a month. It would free up people from counting fares and help with audits. More information will come within the coming days; possibly begin April 1, 2022. The Sun Metro for the next three years needs a policy initiative that would address how to migrate to their fare system; higher fares than New Mexico.

Under the regional program that SCRTD is working with Sun Metro on as a grantee needs a three year projection of services to include Anthony, Sunland Park/Santa Teresa, and Chaparral as well as all the unincorporated parts of Doña Ana County that govern those areas. They are having to build a budget that will break down by route. In addition Sun Metro wants them to address paratransit services. Mr. Armijo is working on a three plan to install paratransit in Sunland Park then move to Anthony and then to Chaparral; needs funding. New Mexico contacted Mr. Armijo to inform him that their planning staff or consultant will look at their routes and services; most will point to Sunland Park. There are more services in Las Cruces so the paratransit may begin there. Mr. Armijo is opening conversations with the Roadrunner staff as well in potential partnership. Councilor Flores voiced her concern that they are disconnected in the south; they need to make better connections. Mr. Armijo added that all the operators are new besides Mr. Bartholomew and himself; some haven't met either.

Councilor Flores commented that the CDC recommended treating COVID as an endemic now. This allows everyone to move on and hopefully lower prices. Mr. Armijo added that if these other entities want SCRTD to add more services or fixed route then they need to help fund them; funding is lagging behind peers as the ones in the north are receiving more funds. There tend to be more funding opportunities in El Paso as they take parts of southern New Mexico. SCRTD have worked closely with Roadrunner to not go after their money and it is working fine. The money from El Paso will be a boon as well as being a direct grant recipient through the El Paso effort; they can now apply for other funds in Texas or competitive. The 5307 money from El Paso will be received in two pots; first pot has been allocated at \$204,000. The reason for a hold up on the second one was due to the government not having a budget. Once that is finished the rest of the

money will be received and staff is already applying for next year's funding; should be between \$550,000 and \$600,000.

There was discussion on the ARPA windfall and infrastructure money. The portal SCRTD is interested in is 5339 for bus facilities and bus equipment capital. At this time Sun Metro has determined that the money can only go to a designated grant recipient. A portion of those funds could be authorized by the designated grant recipient to the service area; they aren't doing that. SCRTD is in discussion with the state to determine if the governor wants to help them become a dedicated recipient to bypass El Paso and go direct to FTA; expected to take a long time. SCRTD is working with all groups on that decision.

Adam Shea gave the presentation on budget numbers. The revenue overall for the fiscal year is expecting an increase of at least 22.5%. One aspect of the increase includes MOU's and agreements with the state and Texas DOT where \$204,000 is expected this year with an expectation of \$550,000 next year. Another aspect includes membership dues which will be discussed after this presentation. The NMDOT grants will be an increase of roughly 14%; hasn't been received but has been applied for. The increase would be 63.2% from NMDOT, currently primarily for capital projects. They will discuss this with the MPO moving forward. Other sources revenues is the bus fares and ticket sales; \$45,000 was anticipated but it may be paid by the county. Another aspect is \$8,000 in advertising; \$8,000 current and \$8,000 budgeted for next year. Advertising may take more to do than what is expected to come in. Other sources show it's a decrease of 56.8% mostly due to the FY22 van program; it is a DOT program and the funds won't be available next year.

Expenditures are expected to have an overall increase of 16.7% over the fiscal year 2022. This includes an increase of 30.5% for personnel, increasing by two operators at a minimum and a mechanic. There is a possibility of hiring a dispatcher specific to the van pool program. There is also an increase in the general bus driver starting wage to \$15 an hour. Employee benefits will increase roughly 4.2% and insurance costs will decrease by roughly 16% over FY22. This is primarily due to a proposal from the insurance company with lower rates. The current fiscal year did have an amendment in the second quarter moving insurance money to other accounts due to over budgeted for those insurances based on what was provided at the beginning of the year. Those items have come down so the amounts are able to be reallocated to insurance. None of the benefits have been reduced or eliminated.

Travel and maintenance is expected to have an increase of 11.5% primarily due to repairing buses. Several buses have gone down and the maintenance costs have gone up. Increased maintenance costs and fuel costs were budgeted for. Staff has diligently worked to not go overboard with supplies and have limited the amount purchased for a 3.1% decrease. There is an expected increase of 0.7% in contractual services due to professional and legal fees. There is an expected

decrease of 23.5% in operating costs for the agencies overall dedication to reduce costs. There is an expected decrease of 77.9% in project costs primarily due to the refurbishing of the Anthony facility. The capital outlay specific to that budget year was left blank until it is determined exactly what staff wishes to go for major purchases.

Councilor Flores asked if there has ever been a surplus; last year was 1% and any surplus would go into reserves for future purchases. A line item for reserves was not included. The grants received only cover up to 80% of the costs so that would limit the reserve. Staff is expecting to be able to make capital purchases with the Texas funds. That additional money will be accepted at the end of the third quarter. Mr. Armijo and Mr. Shea are determining how that money will show up in the budget; depends on where the funds will be used. They are asking for operating funds rather than just capital; wish to lease a facility with those funds. The next step is to go to the regional office in Fort Worth, FTA; the application takes six weeks. The goal is to get the money in and spent by June 30th. Once that happens it will be a cost savings and adjustment as they have already paid for certain items; that could go into the reserves.

Commissioner Ellins asked what the legal fees are for. The legal fees are for helping write up the proposals in the Legal Department as well as a neighbor of the Anthony facility who is intending on suing SCRTD for drainage issues; it is a city/county issue but the neighbor is coming to SCRTD as they are there. The rest is simply anticipatory; hoping it won't be excessive. The attorney who worked on the federal 5307 may be used more going forward if they try for the 5339 initiative.

10. DISCUSSION ITEM: MEMBERSHIP INCREASE BASED ON INFLATION

Adam Shea gave the presentation. Staff would like to increase the membership dues by 35%. Initially the billings was based on population from 2010. Now figures are based off of the 2020 census population; the difference was shown. There was an adjustment in membership dues in 2018; four years ago. There have been multiple adjustments to the population without changes to fares. This is to supplement the increase of fares to 35% for a total \$148,203.68 from \$107,960. The numbers being used are from the federal reserves; have numbers as far back or forward as needed. The numbers from 2010 up through 2020 show an unusual growth in inflation. Historically the numbers have been close to 2% on an annual basis but the last two years was roughly 5% with last year being 7%. The rate is looking at capturing the past 10 years based on the population with no projection of increase moving forward.

Nora Barraza stated that 35% is a bit much and she doesn't understand why they waited to do the increase. Her biggest concern is they are increasing by such a large amount but there are members up north not receiving service. The 35% is based on the consumer price index and population increases. Adding services is something the SCRTD wishes to do; just need to secure materials and how it will

be done. Nora Barraza added that the Town of Mesilla census has been 2,196 since 2010 but the information shows it as 1,772; staff will look into it. Councilor Flores asked for clarification on the amount the City of Las Cruces would need to pay. There wasn't as much of a sizeable increase from 2010 to 2018; the increase calculation in 2018 was small.

Chair Perea stated that he's in support of the increase as the transit needs resources in order to expand and grow, eventually to the northern county. Much of what is purchased must be supplemented; only up to 80% is MOU's and grants. Chair Perea recommended freezing the current rates for the service areas where there is nothing provided; when service begins then the proposed rate can be implemented. Mr. Armijo agreed and will send this out for comment to each of the cities. This discussion is specifically for feedback; the next presentation will be more detailed. Councilor Flores noted that some areas have gone down in population but there is still an expected increase. The final number is based on an increase of 35% per head which is why the numbers went up. There was discussion of people who may have been too scared to take the census and therefore didn't do it; some areas did increase in population but the census doesn't show that.

Mr. Shea explained how the new pricing came to be; the 2018 increase was such a small increase of population that it didn't make much difference. This 35% is an additional increase is per head. There was discussion of not including the 2018 information to keep the information from being too confusing. In order to make sure there is no double dipping the county numbers are lower. For example Elephant Butte was initially billed at \$0.50 per head and is now being increased to \$0.675 per head. The CPI has gone up recently; in past years there were a few years the CPI had no increase or decrease. Mr. Armijo suggested looking at this again in five years to not have such a large increase. They will double check and correct these numbers as necessary for the Board. Chair Perea would like the numbers for Town of Williamsburg and Elephant Butte frozen.

11. DISCUSSION ITEM: SECTION 5307 SPLIT LETTER AGREEMENT - PARTIAL FUNDING

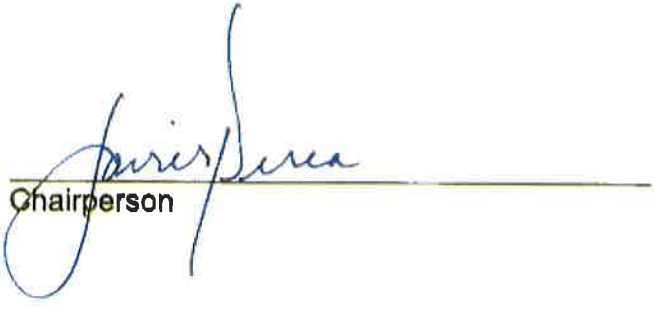
This was discussed earlier. Mr. Armijo will bring a more definitive request at the next meeting once he has something further from El Paso.

12. BOARD COMMENT

Chair Perea thanked Mayor Murillo for hosting the meeting; good to get into other communities served and see them. Those who wish to view the facilities after the meeting may do so.

13. ADJOURNMENT - Next meeting April 27, 2022

Chairperson

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to read "James L. ...". The line extends to the right of the signature.