

**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 approximately 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 almost 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 and 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

midsized 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 considerably, 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 generally 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 works 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 approximately \$100,000.00. Most of the County funds will go to match these grants. Last year SCRTD received approximately \$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 what else to apply monies for? 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 nearly 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 very supportive of SCRTD as she is concerned with her budget. Approximately \$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 guidellnes 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



Chairperson