



District History

Background

The South Central Transit District was established by the Regional Transit District Act, Chapter 73, Article 25, Sections 1-18, NMSA 1978, in November 2006. The District is one of four Districts operating in New Mexico.

Mission Statement

The mission of the South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) is to provide the public with a safe and efficient regional transit system. The system increases access and mobility, reduces congestion, improves the environment, and supports economic development, thereby enhancing the quality of life.

District Strategic Plan

The South Central Regional Transit District's charter is to provide transit service in those rural areas of the district that do not have transportation and need mobility to get to jobs, school, medical appointments, and other activities within the District. Further, the District intends to be multimodal, more specifically, providing bus, rail, carpool/vanpool, and bike connections within the District service area. The need to provide transit connections to other transit providers within the region is needed so that the Mesilla Valley community can travel within and beyond the service jurisdiction of the South Central Regional Transit District.

The District began operating bus service on February 22, 2016, with five buses operating four bus routes, operating service in Las Cruces, Chaparral, Anthony, and Sunland Park in Dona Ana County. An additional route is operated via contract from Alamogordo, Otero County to Las Cruces, NM. The district now operates twenty buses on seven bus routes operating primarily in Dona Ana County with connecting service to El Paso, Texas, and Otero County.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of SCRTD's transit service is to provide cost-effective, efficient, passenger transportation service in Mesilla Valley in areas that do not presently have service. This will provide adults, students, seniors, and individuals with disabilities with public transportation that is presently not provided. The district has two bus operating and maintenance facilities located in Anthony and Sunland Park.

Bus Facilities



Anthony Transit Facility



Sunland Park Transit Facility



The photo shows the inside of the Sunland Park facility where the larger buses are maintained. The Hybrid-electric buses are housed here. Five electric buses have been ordered and will be added to the fleet beginning in the fall of 2024.

New electric charging stations will be added to the fleet in the spring of 2024. This facility supports three bus routes that operate seven days a week.

Geographic and Socio-Economic Challenges

Doña Ana County (DAC) is a 3,800-square-mile jurisdiction in southern New Mexico. It borders El Paso County, Texas, to the east/southeast and shares its border with the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. DAC includes five municipalities and 23 Census Designated Places.

Doña Ana County is facing several challenges as it plans for the future. Compared to the rest of New Mexico, the county has a younger population, a higher poverty rate, a larger Hispanic population, and higher combined transportation and housing costs.

In Doña Ana County, the household median income is \$35,717. In New Mexico, the median

income is \$43,028. Furthermore, Doña Ana County has a 24.5% rate of persons in poverty status. Nearly one in four of the Doña Ana County residents is below the poverty line.

Geographically, the service area lies along the Rio Grande Valley south of Las Cruces, near the Mexican border. This location is fortunate as the population is not spread out across the county; it is concentrated in this Rio Grande corridor, making transit service more viable.

Ridership FY2023



Service Provided

The South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) was formed in 2006. Some starter routes existed in 2014, but the referendum failed so that service was discontinued. In February 2016, service was restarted (only in the south valley and east to Alamogordo) using funds from membership fees, a Doña Ana County commitment of up to \$750,000 per year for the next two years, five buses purchased with funds from local state legislators, office space from the City of Las Cruces, and advertising revenue from various local entities. Service has grown steadily every year except 2020 during the pandemic but has exceeded expectations with annual growth.

The service, morning, midday, and evening, includes two routes between Las Cruces and Anthony (on two different highways), one route between Chaparral and Anthony, and one route between Sunland Park and Anthony. In addition, the SCRTD contracts with Z-Trans (coming from Alamogordo) to make stops east of Las Cruces. The Mesilla Valley Intermodal Transit Terminal (MVITT) provides a hub in Las Cruces for the SCRTD routes, the Alamogordo routes, and the Las Cruces RoadRUNNER transit to meet. Anthony serves as a hub for the routes in the southern part of the county. El Paso’s Sun Metro transit operator provides connections within a short walk in Sunland Park near the Casino.

Need

Public transportation challenges have been identified in several different ways studies by the Empowerment Congress, the development of a Transit Needs Index (TNI) for incorporated communities, public meetings held by the consultant, TransCom, and a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) conducted by the Center for Resource Management (CERM) at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).

In 2013, the Empowerment Congress, a project of the Ocotillo Institute for Social Justice funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation, chose public transportation as the first issue that would be addressed “for both its importance to residents across the county and its ability to affect other areas of concern.” In an informal survey (208 respondents) of residents of the colonies scattered across the county, the number one reason for wanting transit is that people do not have enough money for gas (27%). A close second is they have no vehicle (24%), or the vehicle is broken (5%). Twelve percent cannot drive. Other reasons include being unable to drive because of illness, and not having a driver’s license.

Other documentation of the need for public transportation comes from census data and can be found in the SCRTD Service and Finance Plan. , Doña Ana County’s transit need is similar to that of the United States with a needs index of 10 or Substantial Transit Need. Las Cruces and Santa Teresa fall right at the national average. Mesilla, Radium Springs, and White Sands show a lower than the national average.

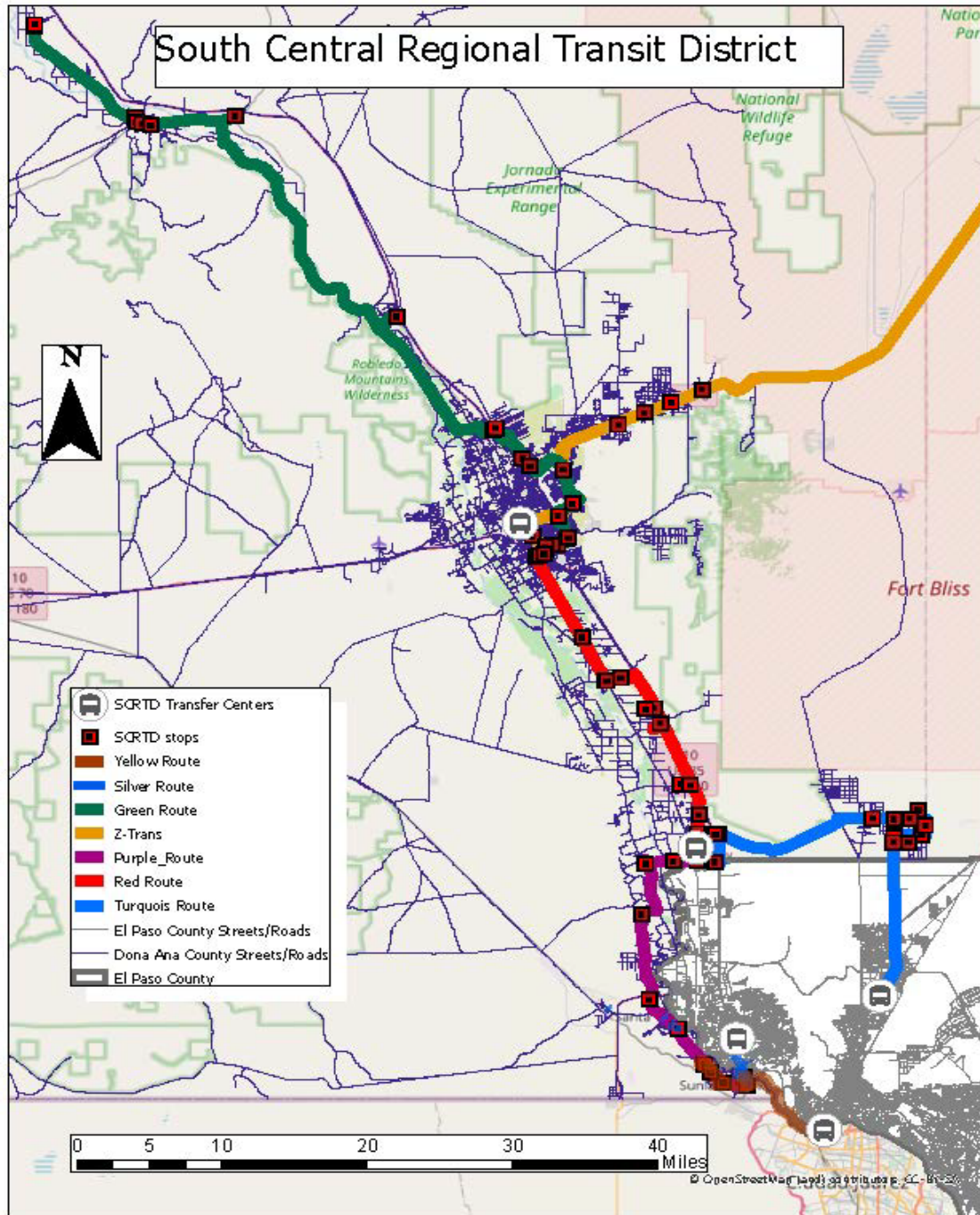
All the rest of the communities within the county have higher than the national average transit needs. University Park is the community with the highest need for additional transit with a score of 13, or a Major Transit Need. At the next level, Anthony, Vado, and Sunland Park all have major transit needs considerably higher than the national level. In Anthony, only 42.7% of the residents earn the median income and the number of persons living in poverty in Anthony is three times the national average.

According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), the residents of Doña Ana County spend more than 65% of their annual income on housing and transportation combined. For a community (Sunland Park-US Census) with a median household income of \$25,990, that leaves slightly over \$9,000 for all other living expenses.

The consultant, TransCom, conducted more than 25 community meetings in each of the ten member entities beginning in May 2012. These meetings made it very clear that people need public transportation because they do not have any means to access educational and vocational opportunities, social and medical services, and shopping. The discussions also centered on the need to travel long distances to employment, educational facilities, and health services, with efficiency and regularity. In 2015, the Center for Environmental Resource Management (CERM) at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) surveyed over 1000 people as part of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). Their findings suggest that transit would improve access to all types of health care services for preventative, acute, and chronic diseases; improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables; reduce risky behaviors due to isolation; and encourage physical activity. Transit would also improve access to economic opportunities and educational opportunities, reduce emissions,

and improve road traffic safety.

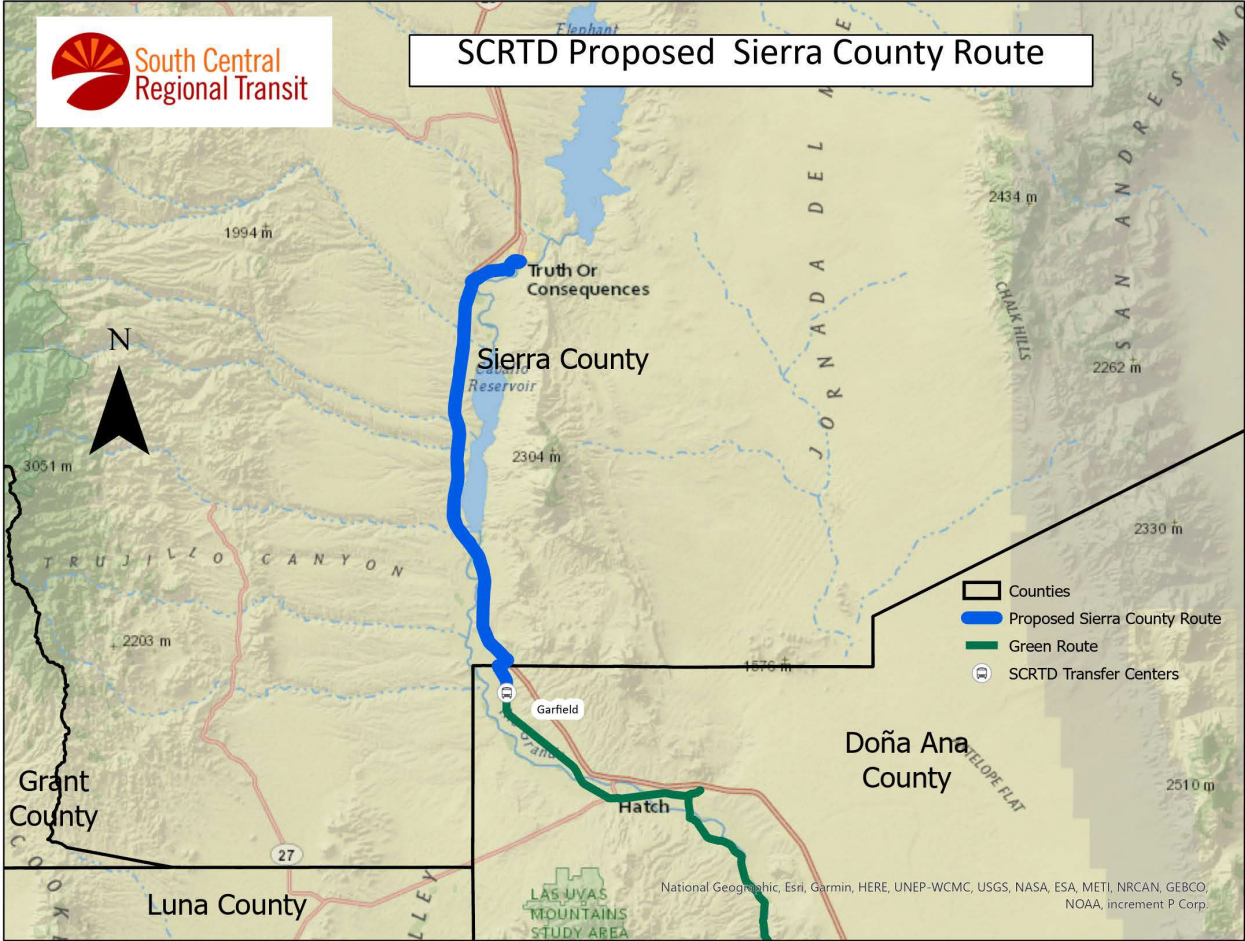
Regional Service Map



The South Central Regional Transit District was established to provide the following:
Provides public transportation services in areas where no transit service exists. Coordinates service with existing services in the region. Provides transportation in rural areas, small unincorporated

communities, and municipalities. Strengthens and supports the economic well-being of its citizens, businesses, service providers, and member governments. Complements regional planning efforts such as Viva Dona Ana (a HUD Sustainable Cities Grant), the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and new Las Cruces and Dona Ana County Comprehensive Plans.

The district is expanding services across the four counties and intends to add service to Sierra County in May 2024.



The new service will connect to the Green route and operate a bidirectional service between the two counties operating service Monday through Friday. The service will in time connect the summer travel from Elephant Butte Lake and will establish the option to connect between the counties and add travel connections to the education and medical facilities in Las Cruces.