



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 necessary 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 the 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 currently not offered. 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 FY2024

SCRTD ANNUAL NTD FISCAL YEAR RIDERSHIP								
Month	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Oct	967	2,639	3,125	3,470	5,883	5,569	7443	10345
Nov	821	2,164	3,017	3,377	4,004	5,793	7752	8983
Dec	757	2,003	2,467	3,109	5,107	5,598	7033	8237
Jan	983	2,220	2,809	2,929	4,131	6,146	8159	9257
Feb	1,380	2,344	3,143	3,398	4,570	5,824	7908	10558
Mar	1,611	2,205	3,058	2,943	5,342	7,041	8671	11054
Apr	1,763	2,689	4,546	1,603	6,184	7,266	8943	11700
May	1,878	2,789	5,346	1,343	6,003	8,224	9633	12336
Jun	1,768	2,974	5,678	1,678	5,630	8,732	8960	10786
Jul	1,616	2,337	4,339	1,628	5,251	7,575	7646	12101
Aug	2,721	3,417	3,644	2,007	6,385	9,193	9842	13491
Sep	2,581	2,779	3,361	2,098	6,507	8,106	9776	13970
YTD	18,846	30,560	44,533	29,583	64,997	85,067	101,766	132,818
Month	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Annual Growth	0	62%	46%	-34%	120%	31%	20%	31%
Cumulative	0	62%	136%	57%	245%	351%	440%	605%

Service Provided

The South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) was formed in 2006. Some starter routes existed in 2014, but the referendum failed, so the 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 regional 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 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 that they have no vehicle (24%), or the car is broken (5%). Twelve percent cannot drive. Other reasons include being unable to drive due to 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 rate than the national average.

All the rest of the communities within the county have transit needs that exceed the national average. 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

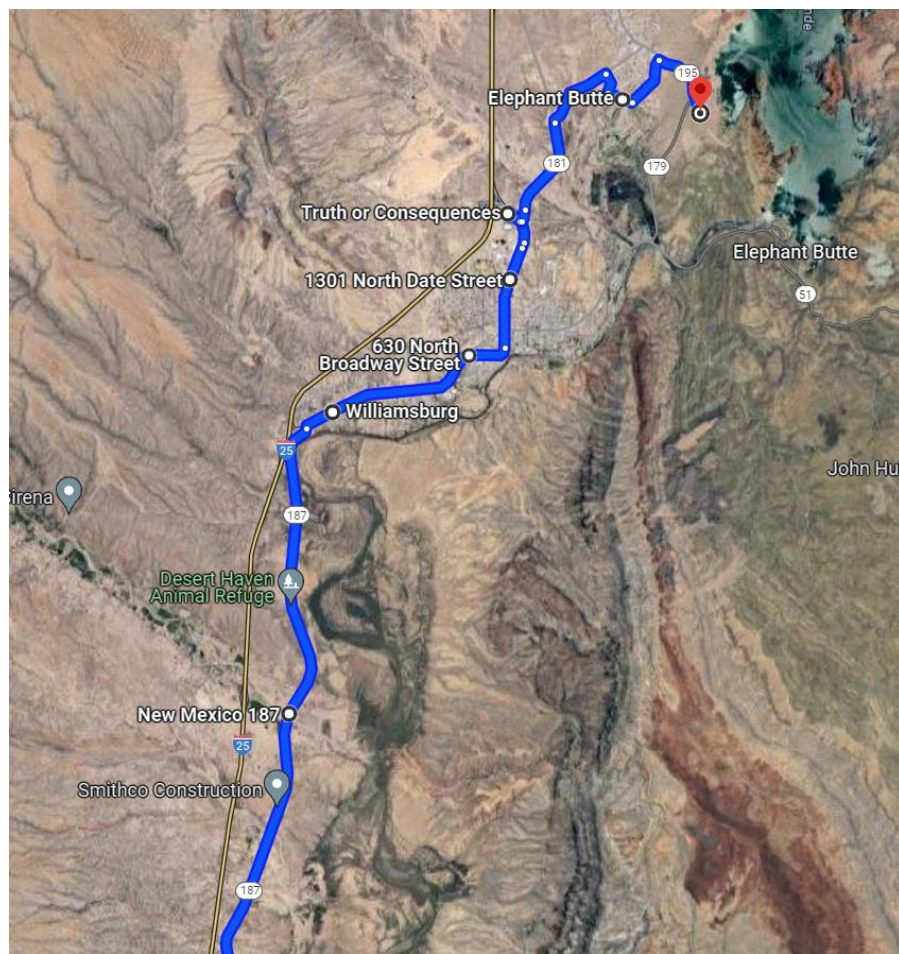
Assessment (HIA). Their findings suggest that transit would improve access to all types of health care services for preventative, acute, and chronic diseases; improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables; reduce risky behaviors due to isolation; and encourage physical activity. Transit would also improve access to economic 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 has expanded services across the four counties and added service to Sierra County via the Blue bus route in fall 2024.



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

2025 Projects & Initiatives

Facility Expansion

Sunland Park Transit & Training Center

The district opened its new Sunland Park Transit and Training Center in spring 2025. The facility provides:

- Training for bus operators and maintenance staff.
- Electric bus and van charging stations.
- A new microgrid and battery energy center to support fleet electrification.
- Space for community events and public information workshops.

Venus Project (Las Cruces Operations & Maintenance Facility)

Planning and early-stage development advanced in 2025 for a new facility in Las Cruces. This will become the district's third primary site, supporting expanded operations and housing additional electric vehicles.

Fleet Growth & Modernization

Electric Buses Delivered

The district received two Arboc low-floor buses in December 2024, with the second vehicle entering service in early 2025. In addition, two new battery-electric buses were delivered in late 2024 under the No/Low 5339 grant, and funding was secured in 2025 to expand the zero-emission fleet further.

CMAQ Grant Bus Procurement

In 2025, SCRTD confirmed programming for buses funded under CMAQ, with three buses to be acquired under a short timeline. Plans were finalized to apply 5339 grant funds for future procurements.

Midlife Overhaul Planning

A plan was initiated in 2025 to overhaul the district's 2019 Gillig hybrid-electric buses at midlife, ensuring long-term reliability and cost efficiency.

Service Enhancements

Weekend & Peak Service

Building on the Saturday service added in 2024, a 2025 ridership analysis led to plans for expanded peak-hour service on the Turquoise and Yellow routes to address demand.

New Route Planning

With additional funding requests made for the Las Cruces and El Paso urban areas, SCRTD began development of:

- A new Las Cruces East Mesa route.
- A new Santa Teresa route serving the Business Industrial Alliance area.

Micro-Transit Program

SCRTD developed a micro-transit program in 2025 to launch in January 2026, covering two service zones in Las Cruces and Sunland Park, operating Monday–Friday.

Energy & Sustainability

Solar Array / Microgrid Project

A solar array and microgrid project at the Sunland Park facility progressed in 2025, with groundbreaking scheduled for winter. Once completed in 2026, it will generate enough energy to cover the facility's operations, including vehicles, maintenance, and administration.

Funding & Strategic Milestones

Federal & State Funding Awards

- Over \$4.8 million in federal grants (via El Paso MPO and NMDOT) were awarded in 2025 to support additional electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, and service improvements.
- SCRTD worked with the Mesilla Valley MPO and El Paso MPO to seek recognition as a designated grant recipient, ensuring direct receipt of urban transit funds.

Compensation & Workforce Initiatives

In 2025, SCRTD launched a compensation study with Southwestern HR Consulting and announced promotions for key management staff, including the Fleet Maintenance Manager and Transit Manager.