



DATE: June 24, 2026

TO: Board of Directors, South Central Regional Transit District

FROM: David Armijo, Executive Director

RE: Authorization to Issue RFP for Regional Transit Service Classification and ADA Compliance Evaluation

BACKGROUND

The South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) was originally established as a regional transit provider serving large rural areas through limited-stop commuter and express routes. Over time, several services have evolved through increased weekday frequency, expanded Saturday service, additional route deviations and intermediate stops, greater connectivity within urbanized areas, expanded service spans, higher ridership volumes, and new service corridors serving employment, education, healthcare, and social service destinations.

As a result, some routes originally designed as regional express or commuter services may now operate more like traditional urban fixed routes. Conversely, other routes may retain their express, rural, intercity, or commuter characteristics. Because ADA complementary paratransit obligations vary depending on the nature of the service being provided, staff recommends that SCRTD complete a formal route classification and ADA compliance evaluation before making final operational commitments.

This recommended strategy refocuses the proposed project from a general paratransit study to a Regional Transit Service Classification and ADA Compliance Evaluation. The evaluation will determine which SCRTD routes, route segments, service days, and urbanized-area operations may be subject to ADA complementary paratransit requirements, and how SCRTD should phase any future service response.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

Staff recommends that SCRTD proceed with a consultant-led evaluation that first classifies the District's existing route network and then determines ADA complementary paratransit applicability. The study should be funded as a planning and compliance evaluation, not as an immediate operating commitment.

The evaluation should determine whether:

- certain routes continue to qualify as express, commuter, rural, or intercity services;
- some routes have transitioned into fixed-route services subject to ADA complementary paratransit requirements;
- only portions of certain routes or only specific urbanized segments trigger ADA obligations;
- expanded Saturday service or increased weekday frequency changes the ADA analysis; and
- future service changes should be structured differently to maintain compliance and manage long-term cost impacts.

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The proposed evaluation would provide the Board and staff with a route-by-route determination of ADA applicability, the geographic limits of any required service, estimated demand, operating cost implications, software and dispatch requirements, fleet and staffing impacts, and recommended implementation options.

The study should answer the following strategic planning questions:

1. Which of SCRTD's nine routes require ADA complementary paratransit?
2. Which routes operate as regional express, commuter, rural, or intercity services?

3. Which routes function as local urban fixed routes?
4. Do ADA obligations apply to entire routes or only to urbanized segments?
5. What operational model should SCRTD adopt if ADA service is required?
6. What are the long-term financial implications of each option?

RECOMMENDED SCOPE OF EVALUATION

The consultant should evaluate both the original regional purpose of SCRTD service and the current operating characteristics of each route. The analysis should distinguish between regional express/commuter characteristics and local fixed-route characteristics.

Regional Express/Commuter Characteristics:

- Limited stops;
- Longer trip lengths;
- Higher operating speeds;
- Regional connectivity;
- Peak-period orientation.

Local Fixed-Route Characteristics:

- Frequent stops;
- Shorter trip distances;
- Expanded weekday service;
- Weekend service;
- Urban circulation functions.

ROUTE-BY-ROUTE ANALYSIS

The consultant would evaluate the following preliminary route classification issues. This table is not intended to determine the final outcome; rather, it identifies the issues requiring professional analysis.

Route	Preliminary Evaluation Focus
Yellow	Urban/local characteristics
Silver	Urban/local characteristics
Purple	Mixed regional and local with limited stops and 90-minute frequency
Red	Mixed commuter and local
Copper	Local urban circulator
Turquoise	Regional commuter with limited stops and hourly service
Magenta	Mixed regional and local route with limited stops and two-hour frequency
Green	Regional express/rural route operating every two hours
Blue	Rural/intercity



FINANCIAL PLAN AND FUNDING STRATEGY

Staff recommends requesting planning assistance rather than operating funds for the evaluation. This approach allows SCRTD to define its ADA obligations, evaluate route classifications, and identify a phased implementation strategy before committing to recurring service costs.

The estimated planning budget is outlined below:

Task	Estimated Cost
Existing Conditions Assessment	\$10,000
Route Classification Review	\$20,000
ADA Regulatory Analysis	\$15,000
GIS Service Area Mapping	\$10,000
Demand and Financial Modeling	\$15,000
Operational Alternatives Analysis	\$10,000
Public Outreach and Stakeholder Meetings	\$5,000
Draft and Final Reports	\$10,000
Board Presentations	\$5,000
Total Estimated Study Cost	\$100,000

The recommended funding strategy is outlined below:

Funding Source	Amount
NMDOT Planning Assistance	\$80,000
SCRTD Local Match (In-Kind Staff Time)	\$20,000
Total	\$100,000

PROCUREMENT RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends issuance of a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) to retain a qualified third-party consultant with demonstrated experience in ADA complementary paratransit planning, FTA compliance, transit operations analysis, demand-response transit systems, GIS service-area mapping, financial modeling, and regional transit implementation planning.

The consultant would be tasked with conducting a route-by-route ADA applicability analysis, evaluating SCRTD's current and planned service characteristics, identifying areas potentially subject to ADA complementary paratransit requirements, developing phased operational alternatives, preparing cost estimates and implementation scenarios, and providing recommendations for Board consideration.

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE

- June 2026 - Board authorization to proceed and seek planning funds.
- July 2026 - Release of RFP
- August 2026 - Proposal review, consultant selection, and Board recommendation.
- September 2026- November 2027 - Study development, route analysis, GIS mapping, and stakeholder coordination.
- December 2027 - Presentation of draft findings to the Board.
- January 2027 - Board review of final recommendations and funding options.
- Spring 2027 - Potential phased implementation, subject to Board direction and available funding.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

As part of the evaluation, the consultant would review multiple operational models if ADA complementary paratransit service is required.

Option One - Direct Operation by SCRTD: Under this option, SCRTD would directly operate ADA service, employ drivers and dispatch staff, procure scheduling and dispatch software, and manage operational functions internally.

Option Two - Contracted Operations: Under this option, SCRTD would provide vehicles, maintenance, fuel, facilities, and administrative oversight while a contracted operator would provide operational staffing and dispatch expertise. The study may evaluate the feasibility of contracting with an experienced demand-response provider, including Project Amistad, which currently operates ADA paratransit service using the TripMaster scheduling platform.

Staff recommends that no final operational decision be made until the completion of the classification and compliance evaluation, the presentation of the consultant's findings, and the Board's review of long-term cost and service obligations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board authorizes development and issuance of an RFP for a Regional Transit Service Classification and ADA Compliance Evaluation; authorize staff to request NMDOT planning assistance; authorize staff to use in-kind staff time as the local match if approved by the funding agency; and direct staff to return to the Board with consultant selection recommendations, a final project budget, and a phased implementation framework.

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Motion to authorize staff to:

1. Request planning assistance funding for a Regional Transit Service Classification and ADA Compliance Evaluation;
2. Develop and issue a Request for Proposals for the evaluation, subject to procurement and legal review;
3. Include route classification, ADA regulatory analysis, GIS mapping, demand and financial modeling, operational alternatives, and stakeholder outreach in the scope of work;
4. Return to the Board with consultant selection recommendations and a final funding plan; and
5. Delay any final operational implementation decision regarding ADA complementary paratransit service until completion of the study and presentation of formal recommendations to the Board.