



## SCRTD 2026 History

*South Central Regional Transit District*

### Introduction and Ten-Year Anniversary

The South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) was established in November 2006 under the Regional Transit District Act, Chapter 73, Article 25, Sections 1-18, NMSA 1978, and is one of four regional transit districts operating in New Mexico. This 2026 History Update is prepared as SCRTD marks ten years of bus service since the District restarted operations on February 22, 2016.

SCRTD began the decade with five buses operating four initial routes in Las Cruces, Chaparral, Anthony, and Sunland Park. By 2026, the District will have become a regional mobility provider with nine fixed routes, service in Doña Ana and Sierra Counties, regional connections to El Paso, and an expanding fleet that includes zero-emission and hybrid-electric vehicles. Annual ridership has grown from roughly 20,000 passenger trips in the early years to a 2026 trajectory approaching approximately 200,000 passenger trips.

The ten-year anniversary is an opportunity to recognize how SCRTD has matured from a start-up rural operator into an essential public service supporting access to jobs, schools, medical care, senior services, food security, higher education, and regional destinations. The District's growth has also required new investments in facilities, charging infrastructure, solar and battery resiliency, dispatch, maintenance, safety, workforce development, grant administration, and future ADA paratransit and microtransit services.

This historical document is intended to summarize the District's development, accomplishments, and major initiatives for 2026. Detailed governance language, the mission statement, bylaws, strategic goals, objectives, and performance measures will be incorporated into the District's Strategic Plan and related policy documents. This history, therefore, focuses on SCRTD's first decade of service and the major projects that will shape its next decade.



**Bus Facilities**



Anthony Transit Facility



Sunland Park Transit Facility / Mobility & Energy Hub

The Sunland Park facility now functions as the District’s flagship Mobility & Energy Hub. It supports administration, dispatch, training, maintenance, electric bus charging, and zero-emission fleet deployment. Electric charging infrastructure, solar generation, and battery storage were advanced as part of the District’s transition from a conventional transit facility to a resiliency-focused mobility and energy hub.

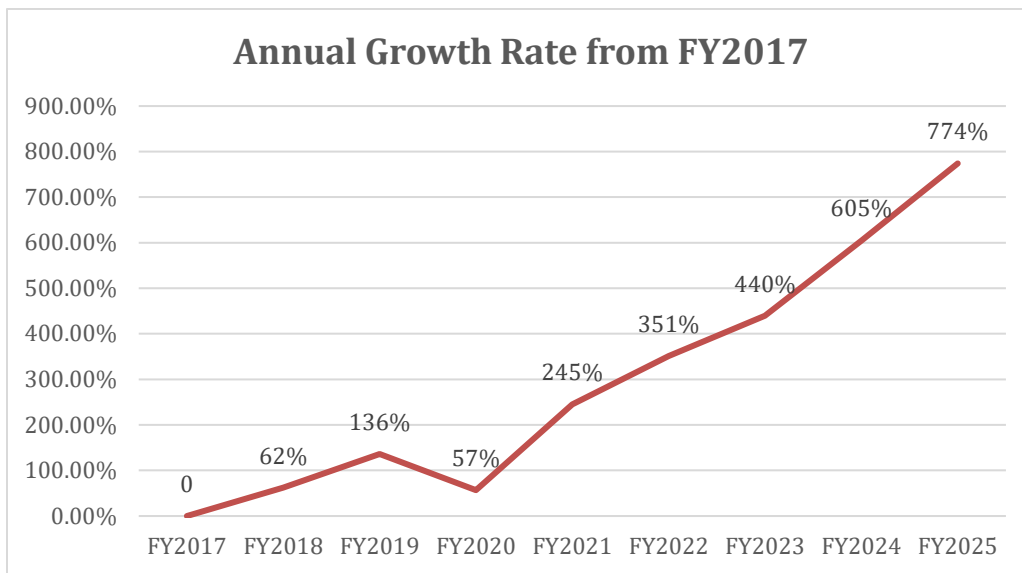
**Geographic and Socio-Economic Challenges**

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

Compared to the rest of New Mexico, Doña Ana County has historically faced a younger population, a higher poverty rate, a larger Hispanic population, and higher combined transportation and housing costs. These conditions reinforce the need for affordable regional transit and reliable connections to employment, education, health care, shopping, and essential services.

Geographically, the service area lies along the Rio Grande Valley south of Las Cruces near the Mexican border. The population is concentrated along the Rio Grande corridor, making regional transit more viable than if the population were spread evenly across the county.

**Ridership Growth Rate**



*NTD Ridership – Through Fiscal Year 2025*

FY2025 ridership exceeded 165,000 passenger trips, reflecting continued recovery and growth following the pandemic. SCRTD's 2026 planning and monthly ridership trends indicate continued growth toward approximately 200,000 annual passenger trips.

### Service Provided

SCRTD was formed in 2006. Starter routes operated before the initial referendum failed and were discontinued. In February 2016, service restarted using membership fees, Doña Ana County support, local legislative funding for buses, office space from the City of Las Cruces, and regional advertising revenue. Service has grown each year steadily, except during the pandemic, and has exceeded expectations. The district now operates 198 square miles of bus service through this service area.

The current SCRTD network includes the Yellow, Silver, Purple, Green, Red, Copper, Turquoise, Blue, and Magenta routes. These routes connect Sunland Park, Santa Teresa, Anthony, Chaparral, Las Cruces, Hatch, Sierra County, and other regional destinations, while also providing connections to Sun Metro in El Paso and RoadRUNNER Transit in Las Cruces. Anthony, MVITT, and the Sunland Park Mobility & Energy Hub remain important transfer and operational points.

### Need

Public transportation needs have been documented through multiple efforts, including the Empowerment Congress, development of a Transit Needs Index, community meetings, and the Health Impact Assessment conducted by the Center for Environmental Resource Management at the University of Texas at El Paso. These studies and community meetings consistently identified the need for reliable public transportation to reach jobs, schools, medical care, social services, shopping, and regional destinations.

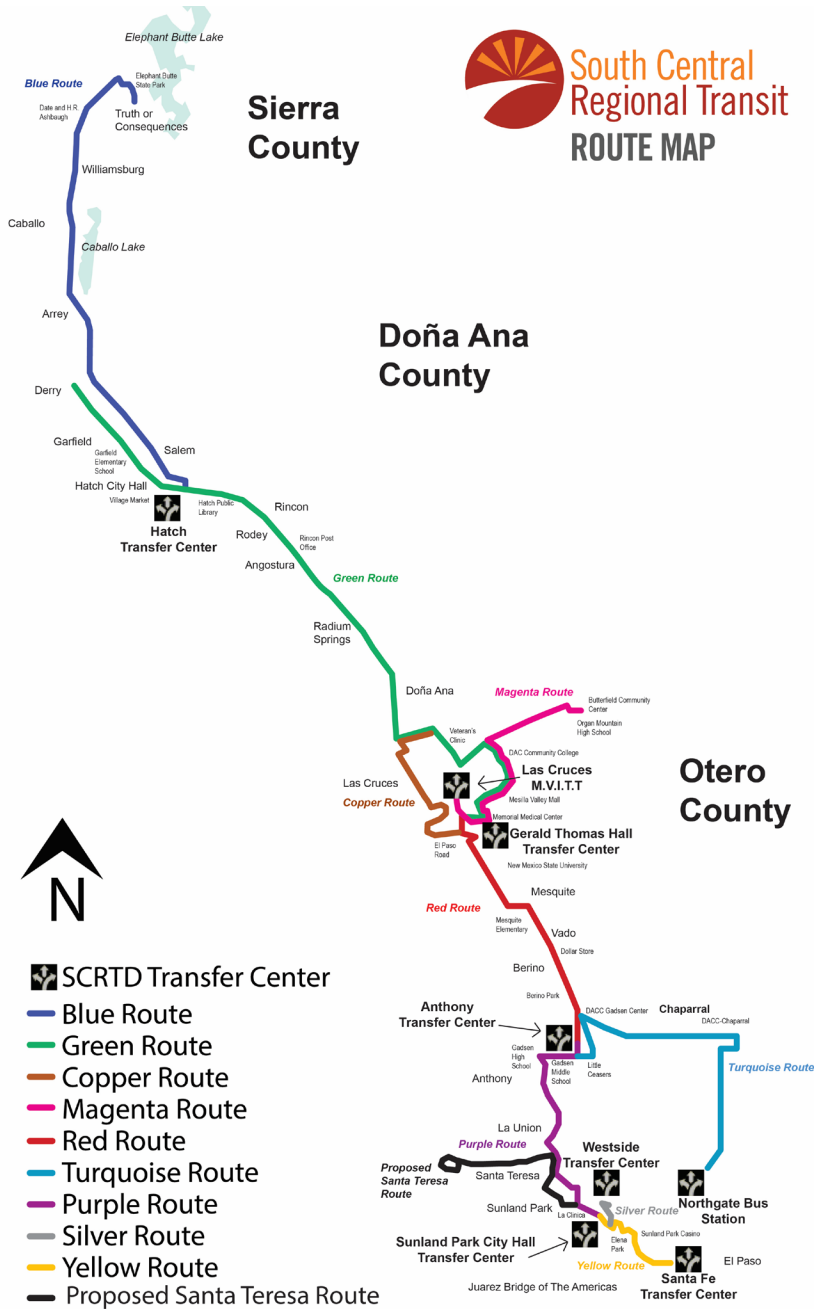
Transit improves access to health care, fresh food, economic opportunity, education, and community services. It also supports reduced emissions, improved traffic safety, and lower household transportation costs for communities where many residents lack reliable access to a vehicle or are unable to drive.



SCRTD's commitment to the communities it serves was also demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the District responded to an urgent food-security need in Sierra County. At the request of the New Mexico Department of Transportation and the Sierra County community, SCRTD transported food from the Doña Ana Food Bank in Las Cruces to Truth or Consequences when no other transportation was available to move these critical supplies. The District provided biweekly trips to help meet the needs of seniors, individuals with

disabilities, and other vulnerable residents. This emergency response reflected SCRTD's role as more than a transit provider; it served as a regional lifeline, using its transportation capacity and operational flexibility to support public health, food access, and community resilience during one of the most challenging periods in recent history.

# Regional Service Map



SCRTD Regional Route Map

SCRTD provides public transportation in areas without transit service, coordinates with existing services in the region, and supports rural communities, municipalities, employers, service providers, and member governments. The District complements regional planning efforts by connecting rural and urban communities throughout southern New Mexico and the El Paso region.

## Sierra County Expansion

The District expanded service to Sierra County through the Blue Route in fall 2024 and continued regional service planning in 2025 and 2026. The service connects to the Green Route and provides bidirectional weekday service between Sierra County and Doña Ana County, supporting access to Las Cruces for medical, education, employment, shopping, and seasonal travel needs.

## Blue Route



*Blue Route / Sierra County Connection*

SCR TD also strengthened regional mobility in Sierra County through the Blue Route, which provides fixed-route bus service between Truth or Consequences, Elephant Butte, and Hatch. This service provides Sierra County residents with access to essential transportation for employment, medical appointments, shopping, education, and other daily needs, while also connecting the rural county to the broader regional transit network.

At Hatch, passengers can connect with SCR TD's Green Route for continued service to Las Cruces, including access to regional employment centers, health care, higher education, government services, and connections to other SCR TD routes. This coordinated service design extends mobility beyond a single community and demonstrates SCR TD's commitment to linking rural residents with larger regional destinations through reliable, affordable, and accessible public transportation.

## 2026 History Update

This 2026 update builds on the District’s prior history by adding accomplishments, projects, and strategic initiatives that were not fully reflected in the 2025 history document. The update reflects SCRTD’s transition from a small rural transit operator into a regional mobility agency with a growing fixed-route network, zero-emission fleet, major capital facilities, and emerging ADA paratransit and microtransit responsibilities.

## 2026 System Snapshot

| Category                   | 2026 Update   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Fixed-route network</b> | Nine routes: Yellow, Silver, Purple, Green, Red, Copper, Turquoise, Blue, and Magenta.  |
| <b>Ridership growth</b>    | FY2025 ridership exceeded 165,000 passenger trips; 2026 planning tracks toward approximately 200,000 annual passenger trips.                      |
| <b>Fleet and vehicles</b>  | A larger multimodal fleet includes electric buses, hybrid-electric buses, cutaways, support vehicles, and electric vans.                          |
| <b>Primary facilities</b>  | Anthony Transit Facility; Sunland Park Mobility & Energy Hub; Venus/East Mesa Transit Facility in development.                                    |
| <b>Service policy</b>      | Fixed-route service remains fare-free through December 31, 2026, with fare restoration planned for January 1, 2027.                               |
| <b>Strategic direction</b> | Growth priorities include ADA complementary paratransit, microtransit, zero-emission fleet deployment, workforce development, and grant capacity. |

## Service Growth and Network Enhancements

SCRTD’s service history now includes a broader regional network than the original 2016 start-up system. The District has expanded from four initial routes to a nine-route network with urban, rural, intercity, and cross-jurisdictional connections.

- The Magenta Route was launched to strengthen Las Cruces East Mesa mobility and improve connections to MVITT and existing SCRTD routes.
- The Blue Route created a new regional connection between Sierra County and the Green Route corridor, supporting access to Las Cruces for medical, education, employment, and seasonal travel needs.
- The Yellow and Silver routes continue to provide high-volume Sunland Park and El Paso connection service, supporting the District’s strongest ridership corridor.
- Weekend and peak-period service investments were evaluated and advanced on key corridors, including Green, Red, Turquoise, Purple, Copper, Yellow, and Silver service areas.
- Centralized dispatch at the Sunland Park hub improved operational oversight, coordination, and seven-day service support.

## Facilities and Capital Development

The District’s facility program became a defining part of SCRTD’s history in 2025 and 2026. Facility investments now support maintenance, training, dispatch, electric vehicle charging, resiliency, route expansion, and future service growth.

### Sunland Park Mobility & Energy Hub

SCRTD acquired the 7.5-acre Sunland Park site at 2001 Futurity Drive in January 2025 and opened the facility on Earth Day, April 22, 2025. In 2026, the facility became the District’s headquarters for administration, dispatch, operations, training, charging, and clean-energy deployment.

- The site includes administrative and maintenance buildings, bus parking, training space, dispatch functions, and room for future growth.
- Security and operational improvements include access control, cameras, fencing, gates, communications infrastructure, signage, and facility technology upgrades.

- The facility supports the District’s electric bus program and provides the foundation for fleet resiliency through solar generation, battery storage, and charging infrastructure.

**Anthony Transit Facility**

The Anthony facility remains a key southern operations point for the District. Improvements and continued use of the facility support service in Anthony, Chaparral, Sunland Park, Santa Teresa, and regional connections.

**Venus/East Mesa Transit Facility**

The Venus Transit Facility in Las Cruces is a major development priority for 2026. The site is planned as a third primary operations and maintenance location, supporting service in Las Cruces/East Mesa, future electric bus deployment, and expanded regional mobility.

- The planned facility includes space for bus parking, light maintenance, electric bus charging, public EV charging, a CDL skills course, and a transfer stop.
- The facility is intended to support deployment of a significant portion of the District’s electric bus fleet in the Las Cruces area, improving air quality and reducing deadhead travel from Sunland Park.
- The project advanced through environmental review, property assessment, appraisal, and grant development activities in 2025 and 2026.

**Fleet Modernization and Clean-Energy History**



SCRTD’s 2026 history includes a clear transition toward a cleaner, more resilient fleet. The District integrated battery-electric buses, hybrid-electric buses, EV vans, cutaway buses, and charging infrastructure into its service and capital plans.

- Five Gillig battery-electric buses were added to the fleet through the District’s Low-No and related clean fleet investments, with two delivered in late 2024 and three more added in 2025.
- Two Gillig hybrid-electric

buses remain important fleet assets, and the District initiated midlife overhaul planning to extend their useful life and reliability.

- Additional Arboc/cutaway and van procurements support rural, 5310, senior, microtransit, and paratransit-related mobility needs.
- A 2025 Low-No award of approximately \$4.05 million supported the next phase of hybrid-electric bus acquisition and fleet modernization.
- SCRTD registered for the New Mexico Clean Transportation Fuel Program, positioning the District to capture future clean-fuel credits associated with electric fleet operations.



*Solar Array progress picture*

### **Solar Array, Battery Storage, and Resiliency**

The Sunland Park solar array and battery microgrid project became one of the District’s most important sustainability investments. The project is designed to support electric bus charging, facility operations, and service continuity during utility disruptions. By adding on-site energy generation and storage, SCRTD is moving beyond vehicle replacement and building the energy platform needed for long-term zero-emission transit operations

### **ADA, Paratransit, and Microtransit Development**



Following the 2026 FTA Triennial Review, SCRTD advanced the planning and policy work needed to implement ADA-compliant paratransit in areas where fixed-route service triggers the requirement. This work represents a major expansion of the District’s service responsibilities and customer mobility obligations.

The District prepared an ADA Fixed Route and Paratransit Plan for Board consideration. SCRTD advanced an RFP for ADA certification and paratransit service support, including eligibility, reservations, scheduling, appeals, and phased implementation activities.

Initial ADA and paratransit implementation is expected to focus on the Sunland Park and Santa

Teresa service area, with future expansion to the Las Cruces/Mesilla Valley area as resources and facilities become available.

Microtransit planning continued for two service zones: Las Cruces East Mesa and Sunland Park. The program is intended to supplement fixed routes, improve first- and last-mile access, and provide more flexible local mobility. While SCRTD fixed-route service remains fare-free through December 31, 2026, ADA and microtransit fare policies will be coordinated with the District's broader fare restoration plan for 2027.

## **Funding and Grant Development**

The 2026 history also reflects SCRTD's increasing grant complexity and funding capacity. The District continued to rely on multiple federal and state programs, including 5311 rural funds, 5307 urban funds, 5310 mobility funds, 5339 bus and bus facilities funds, Low-No funding, CMAQ-related resources, state matching programs, and local membership contributions.

- FY2026 El Paso Urbanized Area funding continued to provide an important New Mexico share for SCRTD regional service and capital needs.
- FY2027 5310 and 5311 awards supported ongoing operations, mobility services, and capital planning.
- State matching grants, Project Improvement Grant funding, and related reimbursement processes supported capital projects and facility needs.
- SCRTD continued coordinating with NMDOT, FTA Region VI, the El Paso MPO, and the Mesilla Valley MPO to align funding, grant transfers, programming, and project delivery.
- The District also continued to address procurement and reimbursement issues involving bus purchases and CMAQ/FTA transition funding, while preserving eligibility and project delivery options.

## **Transit Asset Management and Compliance**

In 2026, SCRTD advanced its internal compliance systems and asset management framework. The District prepared an independent Transit Asset Management Plan for Board adoption, continued NTD reporting, responded to FTA Triennial Review requirements, and expanded internal tracking for grants, procurement, fleet condition, facility improvements, and reimbursement status.

## **Workforce and Organizational Capacity**

As the District expanded its service, fleet, and capital program, SCRTD also strengthened its workforce and administrative capacity. The 2025 compensation study and 2026 implementation work supported pay structure modernization, performance evaluation, training, recruitment, and retention. The District also advanced internal grant administration capacity, procurement coordination, finance support, dispatch coverage, safety training, and project management functions.

- Key organizational priorities include grants administration, procurement compliance, accounting and reimbursement coordination, fleet and facilities management, safety, dispatch, operations supervision, and customer service.
- SCRTD's organizational structure now reflects the demands of a larger regional transit agency with federal compliance obligations, clean-energy infrastructure, capital construction projects, and ADA paratransit requirements.



*Sunland Park Facility*

## 2026 Strategic Priorities

| Priority                                | Purpose   |
|---|---|
| <b>Maintain ridership growth</b>        | Sustain service quality while planning for approximately 200,000 annual passenger trips.                                  |
| <b>Deliver major capital facilities</b> | Complete Sunland Park energy and resiliency investments and advance the Venus/East Mesa facility.                         |
| <b>Implement ADA paratransit</b>        | Adopt the ADA plan, procure certification/service support, and launch phased complementary paratransit.                   |
| <b>Prepare for fare restoration</b>     | Maintain fare-free service through 2026 and coordinate the January 2027 fare transition with regional partners.           |
| <b>Modernize the fleet</b>              | Deploy electric and hybrid-electric vehicles, complete midlife planning, and manage new bus procurements.                 |
| <b>Strengthen funding control</b>       | Improve grant tracking, reimbursement timing, FTA/NMDOT coordination, and direct funding capacity.                        |
| <b>Support Las Cruces growth</b>        | Use the Magenta Route, the Venus facility, and future express bus opportunities to expand mobility in the Mesilla Valley. |

## Historical Significance

The period from 2025 to 2026 marks a major turning point in SCRTD’s history. The District moved from a primarily rural fixed-route operator into a larger regional mobility agency with advanced facilities, clean-energy infrastructure, a growing zero-emission fleet, direct ADA responsibilities, and stronger organizational capacity. The 2026 history demonstrates that SCRTD is no longer only expanding routes; it is building the institutional, facility, fleet, and energy systems necessary to support long-term regional transit service in southern New Mexico.