



MEMORANDUM

Project: RMRTD Visioning (Long-Term Strategic Vision and Implementation Services)

Date: June 8, 2015

To: Tony Sylvester, Rio Metro Regional Transit District

From: Phyllis Taylor, Sites Southwest

Subject: Meeting Summaries, May 12-14, 2015 Stakeholder Outreach

Three stakeholder outreach meetings for the visioning process were held on May 12, 13 and 14, 2015. One meeting was held in each of the counties served by Rio Metro Regional Transit District. These meetings were targeted to invited stakeholders representing the local jurisdictions and transit partners in each of the counties.

Meeting Objectives:

- Obtain input on the RMRTD's *Vision Framework* - a bold vision for the future of transit in this region.
- Identify how the *Vision Framework* can help your community, organization/business, and constituents/customers.
- Identify opportunities to work together on *Vision Framework* implementation.

Desired Outcome:

- Input will be used to inform the final development and ongoing implementation of the RMRTD *Vision Plan*.

Attendees: See sign-in sheets attached

Agenda:

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Project Overview
3. Setting the Stage: Big Picture Context
4. The Vision Framework: Core Themes and Key Strategies
5. Small Group Breakout Discussions
6. Report Back Highlights of Small Group Discussions to Large Group
7. Next Steps
8. Adjourn

Meetings in each of the three counties were organized as small focus groups of invited participants.

The 36 total participants for the 3 meetings included representatives from the following agencies and organizations:

- City of Rio Rancho
- Town of Bernalillo
- Sandoval County
- NM Aging & Long Term Services Department
- NM Department of Veterans Services
- Rio Rancho Regional Chamber of Commerce
- NAIOP
- Urban Land Institute
- City of Albuquerque
- Bernalillo County
- MRCOG
- UNM-Main Campus
- Adelante Development Center
- Transit riders
- City of Los Lunas
- Los Lunas Schools
- City of Belen
- Belen MainStreet Partnership
- Greater Belen Chamber of Commerce
- City of Socorro Transportation
- Bosque Farms
- Rio Communities
- NM Department of Health
- UNM-Valencia Campus
- RMRTD staff working in each county

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM ALL 3 MEETINGS

After a brief presentation on regional transit context and the Board-developed Vision Framework, participants at each meeting were asked to discuss 3 topics:

1. Do you generally agree with the Core Themes and Key Strategies of this Vision Framework?
2. Discuss what benefits you would like to see from the transit improvements envisioned in this Vision Framework.
3. Please prioritize your group's top 3 recommendations for the RMRTD Board as it moves forward with the development and implementation of the Vision Plan.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION TOPICS 1 & 2 (FROM ALL 3 MEETINGS)

Participants supported the Board-developed Vision Framework and felt that the core themes and key strategies were the right focus areas for the future direction of regional transit.

THEME 1: EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

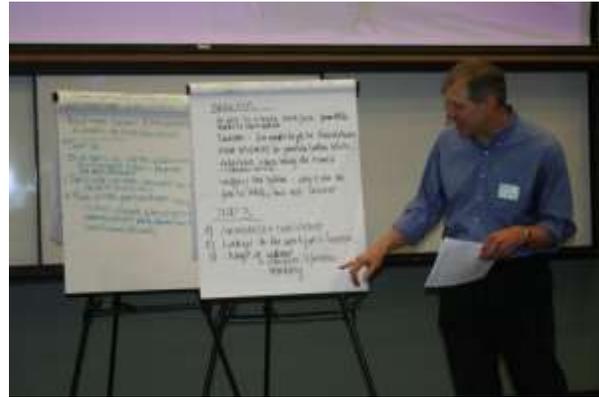
Participants think that Rio Metro needs to change both the perception and reality of riding transit. Transit needs to be a safe, convenient and COOL alternative to the automobile. While participants agreed that transit must be competitive with the automobile, there is a sense that the system needs to be good enough. For example, transit may not be as flexible, convenient and fast as driving a car, but a transit trip must be within a reasonable time, and the travel must be cost effective and convenient. A convenient system of park and ride lots, reduced transfers, coordination of transit schedules with other schedules (schools, employers, senior transport) are essential to attract the three top target riders: seniors, youth and commuters. First and last mile are a high priority. Inability to get to transit from home or from transit to your destination is a barrier.

An exceptional customer experience means that the system is easy to understand. Consistent branding and marketing region-wide would reduce confusion about who provides what service. Better information about routes, schedules and trip planning is needed to help both the technically savvy and

riders with no access to technology get where they are going. With available technology, RMRTD could mine data regarding how customers use transit in order to improve service.

THEME 2: TRANSFORMATIVE REGIONAL SERVICES

Participants recognize the importance of transit to economic development. Economic development includes both creation of “8 to 5” jobs and expanded tourism. Communities want convenient, consistent service other than just a “standard commute” – this means more services for tourists, reverse commuters, and including nights and weekends. Use of technology – the Uber/Lyft App example came up at every meeting – could improve demand/response and first/last mile service with a proven approach to flexible service.



THEME 3: STRONG TRANSIT-CENTERED COMMUNITIES

Bernalillo, Los Lunas, Belen and Albuquerque recognize the power of the Rail Runner to catalyze transit-oriented development. Those communities look to RMRTD and their Board representatives to be advocates for supportive land use in local communities. Beyond political support, participants gave a positive response to grants and other direct assistance to transit-oriented development.

THEME 4: SOUND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Participants understand the need to manage resources efficiently. This included support for a single regional transit agency. They also understand the need to increase revenues. While additional Federal funding was recommended as the best source of new funds, they noted that fares could be higher. The cost of Rail Runner tickets are so much lower than the cost of driving that the train would be a bargain even with higher fares.

THEME 5: INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Employers, schools and service agencies are likely partners. Participants recommended that RMRTD work closely with employers to gather information on work schedules and where employees are coming from to better plan service. These partners could subsidize transit passes and help with first and last mile barriers to public transportation.

THEME 6: INDUSTRY-LEADING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

Participants recognize that political support and leadership are needed if transit is to be successful. Participants support education for staff, the Board and the public at large.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION TOPIC 3 (FROM ALL 3 MEETINGS)

The top 3 recommendations for the RMRTD Board from each group at each meeting are listed below:

SANDOVAL COUNTY MEETING

GROUP 1:

1. First/Last Mile barriers. The need to remove barriers or provide service from home to transit and from transit to the destination is a high priority.
2. Target disabled elderly and youth with reliable transit grid. These populations don't drive.
3. Target commuters as the third focus area.

BERNALILO COUNTY MEETING

GROUP 1:

1. Safety, including safety at the stops and access (street crossings and boarding).
2. Technology, including a whole range of technology. The Uber app is an example of efficient service. Transit should be time and cost efficient/effective/competitive, all things considered.
3. Advocacy - be a force. Rio Metro should be a funding partner for transit-oriented development and be more proactive with transportation demand management (TDM).

GROUP 2:

1. Access to information – connect all information (information hub/one website for all services).
2. Safety, including more attractive stops without barriers.
3. Finance – plan land use, economic development and transit jointly; ensure financial efficiency across all services.
4. Social Capital –capitalize on the health aspect/benefit of transit, environmental benefits of transit and the opportunity to explore the community through transit.

VALENCIA COUNTY MEETING

GROUP 1:

1. Bus service nights, weekends – service during non-commuter hours to serve tourism and alternative work schedules.
2. Park and Ride system – connected by more routes to centers and Rail Runner stations.
3. Public-private partnership – provide employers incentives. Conduct research with the employers to know the needs of employees – where they are coming from and how they could be served efficiently.

GROUP 2:

1. Improved convenience and consistency of service.
2. Improved linkage to the workforce in ABQ and to tourism.
 - a. Need a change of culture. Proactive steps include education, information and marketing.

FULL MEETING NOTES FROM EACH INDIVIDUAL MEETING

SANDOVAL COUNTY DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Theme 1: Exceptional Customer Experience

- How do people know where to go for information?
- Only the Rail Runner site has good information. Google Transit was mentioned as a resource.
 - Example: In Rio Rancho it is hard to find information about transit schedule.
- Most riders can't figure out transit services on their own – what about having a designated transit concierge that could help people put transit trips together? Rio Metro could provide training for agencies that serve transit-dependent populations. These agencies could have a person who helps clients with trip planning.
- Safety is a concern. There needs to be a transit policy oriented to public safety.

Theme 2: Transformative Regional Services

- This region is still a car culture – but that is changing.
- Added services, more marketing, positive messages.
- First/Last Mile is an issue – high priority.
 - Coordinate transit stops with the local bike networks.
- Links from the Rail Runner to jobs should be improved – expand existing routes, coordinate schedules better.
- There is more availability of transit than people realize. People need better information on what is available and how to plan their trips.
- Branch out demand response to cover more area – Rio Rancho to Bernalillo.
- Organize pods to serve local areas. Need to interconnect these areas.
- Eliminate the county line barrier for BRT.
- More feeder/short haul buses to transit centers and Rail Runner.
- Has to be competitive, think out of the box – Uber, Lyft technology could make demand/response service more efficient.
- Target disabled elderly and youth with reliable transit grid. These populations don't drive.
- Target commuters as the third focus area.
- Get counts from existing routes.
 - Along 528 to Wal-Mart/Southern Enchanted Hills to Rail Runner.

Theme 3: Strong Transit Centered Communities

- Town of Bernalillo – has identified TODs at station areas, station area plans are completed.
 - Residents of Bernalillo have the idea that a TOD is either trendy, yuppie or low-income, transit-dependent. This makes the ideas in the Station Area Plan difficult to implement.
 - The Town will want help selling the idea of a TOD to residents.
- **What about NM 528 as a transit corridor?** – This corridor has nodes of retail centers and employment centers from Enchanted Hills to Cottonwood.
- NM 550 – the road's ability to handle traffic is an issue, BRT would be a way to get people across the river quicker.
- Locate traffic generators – RMRTD could go to HR departments of major employers, determine work schedules and employee home locations and find where transit can do the most good.
- RMRTD can tie decisions about service to neighborhood access, transit and pedestrian friendly streets.
- There is a preconception that RMRTD focuses on Rail Runner. Rio Metro need to broaden the public's understanding of RMRTD's services – PR for whole system service area

- Commuter issues – river crossings are the major bottleneck in Sandoval County. Congestion at river crossings mean that transit focused on commuters is important.
- Rio Rancho’s daytime population is 20,000. Half of the City’s workers commute out of the City. The City needs more jobs.
- Promote economic development and wealth creation from becoming auto independent

Theme 4: Sound Financial Stewardship

- More competition for Federal dollars means it is harder to get these funds.
- Look at creative ways to increase revenue – advertising is an example – local revenues are kept in local funds, which allow more flexibility for local operations.
- The Board needs to spend money where it is going to get used. Set ridership standards – i.e. align the level of service with ridership.
- Use Sandoval County as test site – test schedule and other changes and see if the changes increase transit ridership.
- Support unified regional agency.
- Rapid Ride – Rio Rancho to ABQ – best chances for success.

Theme 5: Innovative Programs and Partnerships

- In Rio Rancho the hospital in City Center is an important destination – in fact, both hospitals in Rio Rancho should be better served.
- Senior Programs – Partnership between existing senior programs and transit service would benefit seniors in the county.
 - 20% of people above 65 don’t drive. This is a good population to target for transit service.
 - Senior centers could be a point of transferring riders from transit to other services.
 - The NM Aging & Long Term Services Department provided a written statement, attached.
- Coordinate with medical transport – links through senior centers.
- UNM/CNM – transit to main campus, schedule is an issue with the Rail Runner.
- Partner with schools

Top 3 Implementation Priorities suggested for the RMRTD Board

1. ***First/Last Mile barriers.*** The need to remove barriers or provide service from home to transit and from transit to the destination is a high priority.
2. ***Target disabled elderly and youth*** with reliable transit grid. These populations don’t drive.
3. ***Target commuters*** as the third focus area.



BERNALILLO COUNTY DISCUSSION SUMMARY

MRCOG Board Room, May 13, 2015

Group 1

Theme 1 - Strategy 1.1

- Travel time door-to-door – transit needs to be same or better time, less cost than single occupancy vehicle.
- Transit in general would benefit from added services, more marketing, positive messages.

Theme 1 - Strategy 1.2

- Safety is important. This applies not only to the experience on the bus, but access to the bus and getting on and off the bus.
- Accessible buses – safe to get on and off for people with mobility issues.
- Accommodate seniors – age friendly experience.
- Work with local government on access – safe pedestrian access, including pedestrian crossings and sidewalks.
- Better system – reduce transfers to make trips easier, better information so that it is clear what to do.
- Add the idea of placemaking and activity. It's not just about amenities at transit stops, but also making transit stops active places.

Theme 1 - Strategy 1.3

- Expansion needs to be economically justified within the overall district structure.

Theme 2 - Strategy 2.0

- Hierarchical system design – think of it like street classifications – Service ranging from Bus Rapid Transit along major corridors to local circulators that serve specific areas
- Time competitive and cost competitive are important. Give riders the ability to get rid of a car, for example convenience and safety have to be good enough to make transit an attractive option.

Theme 2 - Strategy 2.2

- Expand local on demand service. The Uber, Lyft model is an example of a service that takes advantage of technology.
- Use data mining to better understand customer activity and know enough about riders to do one-to-one marketing.

- Need a huge marketing push around transit-centered communities.
- Also need to engage policy makers in this process.
- Disincentives can make transit a more attractive option – limited parking has made transit more competitive with driving to UNM.

Theme 5 - Strategy 5.3

- Coordinate campus planning at UNM and other post-secondary schools with the transit system i.e. locations of stops, land use.
- Coordinate location of stops and schedules with K-12 schools.

Benefits – How can this benefit your organization/business?

APS – public K-12

- It needs to be easier to get where you want to go
- Students and parents need education about where transit service goes and how it works.
- Education would offer help to people who are uncomfortable with the system.

COA planner

- Reality is that transit that is competitive with cars pulls development with it. Transit has to be good enough to attract transit-oriented development.
- There is enough data or ability to collect data to know return on investment (ROI) created by transit and placemaking.
- The goal should be to increase/create viable transportation options. Factors include time, economics, easy to do, pleasant enough. It isn't likely that transit will take equal or less time than a car, but it has to be good enough.
- People want to get to centers – need system that serves more than Central Avenue.

Top 3 Implementation Priorities suggested for the RMRTD Board

Safety

- It is important to get more people on the bus.
- The system should not be unsafe.
 - Safety at the stops.
 - Safe access (boarding, street crossings).
- Time and cost efficient/effective/competitive, all things considered.

Technology

- Whole range of technology. The Uber app is an example of efficient service.
- Rio Metro should be a funding partner for transit-oriented development.
- Knock down barriers.
 - Parking benefit districts incentives.

Advocacy - be a force

- More proactive with transportation demand management (TDM).

Group 2

Theme 1 - Strategy 1.1

- Transit needs to be faster or equivalent to the car.

Theme 1 - Strategy 1.2

- Safety is important
- Safety is biggest barrier to attracting more riders.
- Make stations and bus stops more attractive.

Theme 1 - Strategy 1.3

- It is difficult to get to transit stops – remove barriers.
- Improve signage to indicate where traffic stops are and what the schedule is.

Theme 2 - Strategy 1.2

- The system is confusing.
- It is hard to find information about schedules.
- Different agencies provide different services – information about all transit services should be in one place accessible, a more centralized information hub that includes the Rail Runner, ABQ Ride, rural transit and other specialty services.
- More transparency is needed.
- Easy interface so that people have an easier time accessing information.
- Pay attention to the elderly and others that don't know how to use technology or don't have access to technology.

Theme 3 - Strategy 3.2

- Encourage Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) to spur transit use.
 - Achieve TOD with gap financing and redevelopment projects.

Theme 4 - Strategy 4.1

- Cost to deliver service – moving greatest number of people with budget available
- Change modes or service depending on demand – use smaller vehicles, different schedules where demand is less.
- Pursue efficiency gains across all modes - To what end? The money saved should go into improving transit services.
- Change strategy to be: Pursue efficiency gains across all modes services
- How is the money being used?

Theme 5 - Strategy 5.1

- What is the economic development approach that the Rio Metro is targeting - Economic development should be place-oriented.

Other comments:

- Re-branding to change overall perception of transit.
 - Use to transit system as a community-building tool

Benefits – How can this benefit your organization/business?

CABQ

- Rebranding/new vision can help make the case for higher density development (TOD – supported by transit – Transit supported by TOD).

Veterans

- Supporting rural areas with transit options.
- Helping to bring people to where they want to go.
- Make the process easier to understand and to maneuver.

UNM

- Partnerships with Rio Metro are important to UNM.
- It's all about access/ access to transportation.
- High functioning transit systems are essential.
- The growth of the UNM hospital will require good transit access and connections.
- Park and Ride options important for rural areas.

City Council

- Sound financial stewardship will help public and general perception of the Rio Metro and will in turn make it easier to access funding.

Top 3 Implementation Priorities suggested for the RMRTD Board

Access to information

- Connecting all information (information hub/one website for all services).
 - Provide easier access to help people to get around.
 - With all service represented.

Safety

- Making stops more attractive.
- Removing barriers.

Finance

- Plan land use, economic development and transit jointly.
- Financial efficiency across all services.
 - Use the financial argument as a way to tell the story.

Social Capital

- Capitalize on health aspect/benefit of transit (Sitting is the new smoking).
- Capitalize on environmental benefits of transit.
- Capitalize on new/different experience to explore city through transit.
 - Built/enhance/explore community fabric.



VALENCIA COUNTY DISCUSSION SUMMARY
Los Lunas Transportation Center, May 14, 2015

Group 1

- RMRTD /transit is a component of economic development.
- Transit access is important to tourism in Valencia County.
 - Tourism is a big push in Belen, drawing on the historic downtown, Harvey House Museum. These are close to the Rail Runner station but need better access.

Theme 1

- Components are in place – First mile/last mile need work – both for commuters and weekend visitors.
- Los Lunas – the Rail Runner station is less than a mile to the Museum of Heritage and Arts in the Village library and to restaurants along Main Street.
- In rural communities there is no service on weekends, which is a problem for tourism.
 - Existing service misses key locations – i.e. downtown Belen core
 - Older visitors need help with access

Theme 1 - Strategy 1.1

- Is there a metric that defines “competitive with car”? Need to figure out what that is.
- Having to make an appointment 24 hours in advance is not flexible as things change – is there a software fix that would make on demand service more flexible, like Uber? A system that is clean with a high level of customer service.
- Bosque Farms - Park and Ride MOU in place with Rio Metro but no lot was built. A park and ride is a good solution in rural areas where customers are dispersed.
- UNM Valencia routes are good – UNM Valencia needs transport during the day for high school students to the campus area that will be served by RMRTD.
- Los Lunas – Transit is a good solution to alleviate traffic congestion – 50% of workers commute and it would relieve congestion on Main Street if Rio Metro could increase the percentage of commuters on transit.
- How can RMRTD help change Valencia County’s auto focused mind set?
 - Education, get the word out about transit services and the benefits of transit.
 - Incentives – ways to attract first time riders or people who don’t take transit might include “bring a buddy” where a paid rider or rider with a pass could bring a friend for free, coupons for reduce fares, a promotional “free ride month”.
 - Last mile is critical
- Partnerships could include working with employers to get more workers on transit, providing vehicles at the Rail Runner stop that people could use for the last mile with a paid fare.
- Need to serve workers who make a reverse commute – don’t assume that all commuters go one way. Some people commute from Albuquerque to work in Los Lunas or Belen.
- Broaden the service beyond commuters. This means offering more routes and times.
- Rio Communities has 5,000 residents that were attracted to a golf course community. Retail hasn’t materialized, but the City bought the local shopping center and is converting it to a multi-purpose City Center. The center has the potential for a park and ride with amenities for seniors. For younger riders the park and ride could tie to UNM.
- “Airplane cars” – have cars available for Rail Runner riders to use, similar to the cars that FBOs provide at general aviation airports. Cars could also be used at Park and Rides.
- Another solution for commuters might be a private leased van to use at the park and ride – subsidized with advertising. Volunteer drivers could pick up a car pool to the Rail Runner station in the morning and take riders home at night.

- In Valencia County the system needs both fixed routes and flexible on demand service.
- Uber and Lyft – could those services be subsidized or on contract to provide first and last mile service?
- First time riders need information on how transit service works.
- To generate more revenue, raise user fees. Existing fares are very low.
- Make discounts available to employers who provide passes to their employees.
- Partner with existing organizations as ambassadors for using transit. These “ambassadors” would be able to help people plan their trip.
- The system in Valencia County needs more loops with ½ hr connections to the main centers. This could happen with the vehicles that Rio Metro already has – don’t need more vehicles.

Top 3 Implementation Priorities suggested for the RMRTD Board

1. **Bus service nights, weekends** – service during non-commuter hours to serve tourism and alternating work schedules.
2. **Park and Ride system** – connected by more routes to centers and Rail Runner stations.
3. **Public-private partnership** – provide employers incentives. Conduct research with the employers to know the needs of employees – where they are coming from and how they could be served efficiently.

Group 2

Theme 1

- Consistency and customer service
 - Having to call ahead is a problem – to take public transit is not easy.

Theme 2 - Strategy 2.1

- Meadow Lake and El Cerro Mission – trips from these areas are too long. There need to be better connections. There are not enough river crossings.
- Transit is focused on ABQ – how can this be reversed? Transit needs to serve the reverse commute. Valencia County needs an employment base.
- People need to know how to get from A to B. Make transit more convenient for seniors –
 - Help them work the system
- Think outside the box – smaller vehicles, zip-car, Uber, Taxi as alternatives to buses.
- Transit competitive with car – transit needs to be even more convenient to attract people that would otherwise take their car.
- Belen rail crossing is not convenient. Only skaters use the pedestrian bridge. Valencia County needs more fixed route connections to the train.
- Consider the increase of seniors in communities and the trend towards an aging demographic. Seniors should be a target market for transit.
- The stigma of transit is a problem - The perception of taking a bus is generally bad.
- Marketing is needed to make transit cool.

Theme 3

- Tourists are important to the County. They arrive on the train and need to get from A to B. There is a need to get people to economic nodes. The system would benefit from more TOD development.
- Traffic is getting worse – transit can relieve traffic congestion.

Theme 6

- Political support is needed for transit. Consistent leadership and support are needed.

Benefits – How can this benefit your organization/business?

- Valencia County benefits from access to a bigger workforce from ABQ through transit
 - Generally make transit more convenient for people commuting to jobs in Valencia County.
- **Tourism** – this is a focus for Belen. Transit service is needed for people to get to the Harvey House.
- RMRTD needs more resources to provide better service.
- Transit Experience – make transit experience better.
- Unifying the system – it helps to have one transit provider.

Top 3 Implementation Priorities suggested for the RMRTD Board

1. Improve convenience and consistency of service.
2. Improve linkage to the workforce in ABQ and to tourism.
3. Need a change of culture. Proactive steps include:
 - a. Education
 - b. Information
 - c. Marketing