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

Contract: 2014-01

To: Tony Sylvester, Rio Metro Regional Transit District

From: Kathleen Rooney, Renaissance Planning Group

Date: 11/2/15

Re: Regional Transit Agency Peer Review White Paper – FINAL

Purpose of this White Paper

Renaissance Planning Group conducted a peer review of transit agencies to inform the initial visioning process and the subsequent development of Rio Metro Regional Transit District's (RMRTD) Strategic Vision Plan. In general, the purpose of a peer review is to research and explore comparable agencies performance to provide insights into opportunities for better management, service, operations, etc. This specific peer review identified up to four (4) peer agencies for RMRTD and its partner agency ABQ RIDE, benchmarked RMRTD operations (or, in some cases, RMRTD operations combined with ABQ RIDE operations) and regional outcomes against those peers, and then articulated key "lessons learned" from the benchmarking assessment. This white paper highlights the key findings and conclusions from this peer review process.

What Does this White Paper Contain?

This peer review followed the following steps:

- **Who are we most like?** We selected peer agencies based on comparable regional context (e.g. population, demographics, economy, geography, etc.) and agency context (e.g. size, service mix, etc.).

- **How do we measure up?** We benchmarked the Albuquerque region's transit system and services (including both RMRTD and ABQ RIDE) against the identified peer agencies' data (along with available baseline data) on key metrics.

- **What can we learn from others like us?** We identified opportunities for the visioning process (and resulting Strategic Vision Plan) from insights gleaned from the peer agencies.

Each step of the peer review process is described in more detail below, along with key findings from the analysis of the peers.

Next Steps

This peer review document – along with a PowerPoint summary of its key findings and conclusions – will be delivered to the RMRTD Board in advance of their 4/17/15 regular meeting. This white paper may be revised further based on feedback at that meeting or potential subsequent input from partner agencies and external stakeholders. Ultimately, the insights learned from peer regions and peer agencies highlighted in this white paper will be used to develop recommendations in the RMRTD Strategic Vision Plan, including: a) action items to address the identified key issues and opportunities and b) resources needed to implement those action items to achieve the long-term vision.

A Note About Peer Reviews

Although there are many similarities amongst transit agencies, it is important to recognize that each operates within different contexts, shaped by differing geography, history, and development patterns. This makes the search for the ideal peer agency set difficult as well as making meaningful comparisons between such agencies challenging. Put simply: there is no "perfect peer," in the sense that no two agencies or regions can ever be expected to be an exact match. Despite this, peer reviews can offer a way to identify opportunities for agency improvement – spanning from operational techniques to full-fledged public funding initiatives. The next section describes how peers were selected in conversation with RMRTD staff, board, and stakeholders.

Who Are We Most Like?

This section discusses each of the regional transit agencies that were included in this peer review, and why they were selected.

A Few Caveats Regarding the Data

Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database (NTD) data was used to allow for quantitative comparisons across peers. This is because the NTD attempts to facilitate consistent reporting of data by all transit agencies by providing specific definition of data being requested and how to report.[1] However, there are a few caveats associated with using NTD data for this peer review, as described below:

- Data is from 2012, which at the time the peer review was initiated was the most recent year of complete NTD data.

[1] Note that the *Transit Operations and Agency Organizational Options* white paper uses ridership data directly from RMRTD and ABQ Ride planning documents because the scope of that white paper didn't require making quantitative comparisons to other peer agencies and therefore didn't need to rely on the NTD data that facilitates consistent reporting of data across agencies.

- Comparing the Albuquerque region to other peer regions (such as the El Paso region) requires aggregating/synthesizing the datasets from two transit systems (RMRTD and ABQ RIDE) to provide a more accurate regional profile.
- These comparisons depend heavily on service area characteristics, which is the most consistent data available across all peers. However, they are not easily aligned within regional boundaries because they are based on transit agency activities and operations. There also may be differences due to how the service area is defined, as some agency discretion is allowed in the data reporting.
- 2012 National Transit Database (NTD) ridership data do not include Sandoval County fixed route service (e.g. to Cuba, Jemez Springs, etc.), Valencia County demand response, ABQ Ride service funded by RMRTD, or JARC services. Data do include Rail Runner, RMRTD senior service in Rio Rancho (categorized as demand response), and daily fixed route contracted services (e.g. off-peak service along the Rail Runner corridor and the 366.) The reason for this is that at the time of reporting the un-included areas reported to a different rural NTD jurisdiction. There has been a shift how this ridership has been reporting from rural to urban (and then captured under the RMRTD). Therefore, these numbers do not represent current (2015) ridership or budget numbers, and that the derived are shaped largely (almost in their entirety) by the Rail Runner.

Peer Review Selection

In order to identify the most appropriate peer agencies, Renaissance – in conversation with the RMRTD and the consultant team – used several characteristics of the agencies' region and the agencies' provision of transit service:

- **Regional size:** Using metropolitan statistical areas as the basis for comparison, which helps reflect the regional nature of transit more effectively than just limiting it to the urban area designation.
- **Transit system/service size:** Combining the service provision of both RMRTD and ABQ RIDE.
- **Nature of transit services:** Prioritizing systems that included commuter rail and demand response as well as conventional bus service to reflect the diverse transit service types in RMRTD's and ABQ RIDE's collective portfolio.
- **Socio-economic similarities:** Reviewing briefly demographics, key economic drivers or industries, etc.
- **Innovation/aspirational character:** Assessing those "best practices" agencies that would provide the best "aspirational peers" for this long-term strategic plan visioning process. This was based on transit industry innovation, or other best practices that are aligned with the goals of this project (such as diversifying sources of revenue either from locally-controlled sources and/or discretionary federal funds).

Approximately 15 regions and their transit agencies were initially evaluated as potential candidates for peer regions /agencies. These 15 potential peers were then screened based on a variety of information

sources, such as the National Transit Database[2] and input from RMRTD staff and management and the entire consultant team. Four (4) peer agencies were ultimately selected that – like RMRTD – provide a range of transit services, each offering a unique combination of fixed-route, commuter rail, light rail, and paratransit, as well as demand response or special services (e.g. airport shuttles, ski shuttles, etc.). They also have broad economic diversity, with a comparable mix of primary industries (retail, professional/business services, educational/health care services, etc.).

As a result of this initial screening and the purpose of the peer review being to inform long-term strategic visioning, it became clear that two categories of peers needed to be identified. These were: 1) "status quo peers" (the agencies that RMRTD most resembles today) and 2) "aspirational peers" (the agencies that RMRTD aspires to emulate in the future). Grouping and evaluating peers in this manner helps to ensure that the peer review will be useful both for "today's Rio Metro RTD" (near-term implementation of the Strategic Vision Plan) as well as "tomorrow's Rio Metro RTD" (long-term implementation of Strategic Vision Plan).

The following four peer agencies were selected, with two in each category of "Status Quo Peers" and "Aspirational Peers":

- **Status Quo Peers**
    - San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission and the San Joaquin RTD (Stockton, CA): Similar in size and transit service, and also represents a dual transit agency service delivery model.
    - El Paso Mass Transit District "Sun Metro" (El Paso, TX): Similar in transit service provision, and particularly valuable with its demand-response program.
- **Aspirational Peers**
    - Near-Term Aspirations (10-20 year planning horizon):
        - Utah Transit Authority (Salt Lake City, UT): Larger and more robust transit service, but analogous to the Albuquerque region in many ways.
    - Long-Term Aspirations (20+ years planning horizon):
        - Denver Regional Transit District (Denver, CO): Significantly larger region and more robust transit service, but also analogous to the Albuquerque region in many ways.

To better understand the difference between "status quo peers" and "aspirational peers," consider two factors that were used to select peer agencies and group them into these two categories: 1) the size of the region (both population and geography) and 2) the region's transit mode share for commute (journey to work) trips. For example, the Stockton and El Paso regions more closely represent where the

[2] Federal Transit Administration, *National Transit Database*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram on12/16/2014.

RMRTD region is now – comparable in population size with similar levels of transit use among commuters (about 1.5%). Meanwhile, Salt Lake City and Denver regions represent the RMRTD regions' potential for the future, with larger populations and higher levels of transit use among commuters (3.2% and 4.4%, respectively).[3]

Regardless of whether a peer agency was determined to be "status quo" or "aspirational," all of the peers have several elements in common with each other and with the RMRTD region: all are western regions that have similar post-WWII development patterns and are largely dependent on the automobile as the primary regional transportation mode. More details about the peer agencies' regional context and service contexts (transit service portfolio) are described in the next section below.

Summary of Peer Agencies' Contexts

The four peer agencies' respective regional and system (transit service portfolio) contexts are summarized below.

- **Status Quo Peer 1: San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) and San Joaquin Regional Transit District (SJRTD).** The City of Stockton and the surrounding San Joaquin region (population 902,000) is one of the fastest growing regions in California. Like Albuquerque the area anticipates steady growth in population and jobs over the next few decades.[4] SJRRC and SJRTD provide public transportation to the area. SJRRC manages the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE), an 86-mile commuter rail line that connects the cities of Stockton and San Jose (in Silicon Valley). SJRTD offers a mix of bus services: commuter, intercity, fixed route, and demand responsive (Dial-A-Ride). SJRTD also operates a deviated fixed service, comprised of eight routes connecting Stockton and five other cities in San Joaquin County, on which buses will deviate from the route up to a mile for ADA-certified[5] elderly and disabled riders.[6] Although a bit smaller than Albuquerque in size, it was one of the few regions with a commuter rail and demand response service at its inception[7] as well as an urban bus system, providing an overall mix of services within a similar segregated regional and organizational context.

- **Status Quo Peer 2: El Paso Transit District (El Paso TD).** The El Paso metropolitan area (population 831,000) anticipates steady population growth over the next few decades, and its economy has remained strong despite the recent economic turndown.[8] In both El Paso and Albuquerque, government employees make up one-fifth of the workforce.[9] The El Paso Transit

[3] U.S. Census, *2013 American Community Survey*. Accessed at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml on 12/16/2014.
[4] San Joaquin Council of Governments, *2014 Regional Transportation Plan*. Accessed at http://www.sjcog.org/DocumentCenter/Index/20 on 12/16/2014.
[5] Americans with Disabilities Act. More information at http://www.ada.gov.
[6] San Joaquin Regional Transit District, Hopper Routes. Accessed at http://www.sanjoaquinrtd.com/maps_and_schedules/hopper.php on 12/16/2014.
[7] Unable to confirm that SJRCC still provides demand response.
[8] The City of El Paso City Plan Commission, *El Paso Plan*. Accessed at http://planelpaso.org/comprehensive-plan-elements/ on 12/16/2014.
[9] U.S. Census, *2013 American Community Survey*. Accessed at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml on 12/16/2014.

District provides transportation service (Sun Metro) to the metropolitan area, offering fixed routes, paratransit, job express (flexible-route, on-demand service), and a newly opened bus rapid transit line.[10] The system also includes, downtown circulators, and express buses – and additionally, the city is in the early planning stages of a streetcar line. In recent years, Sun Metro has experienced significant growth in ridership; there was a 27% increase between fiscal years 2009 and 2012.[11] Since 2008, the system received several awards for excellence, including the Texas Transit Association's 2014 Outstanding Metropolitan Transit System award and the American Public Transportation Association's 2011 Outstanding Public Transit System award. Nationally, they are also very well known for their successful regional demand-response system.

- **Aspirational Peer 1: Utah Transit Authority (UTA).** The Salt Lake City metropolitan area (population 1.1 million) is projected to experience significant population growth between now and 2040 – with forecasts showing a 55 percent increase. Like Albuquerque, Salt Lake City's population is significantly more educated than the nation's average. About 30 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher; the U.S. average is 18 percent.[12] Major industries in the area include Trade, Transportation, and Utilities, Professional and Business Services, and Government.[13] The Utah Transit Authority operates the FrontRunner rail system (the state's first commuter rail line), a light rail network, streetcar, fixed route and paratransit service. UTA also offers a FLEX Bus service in which buses are able to deviate from their routes to provide more door-to-door service,[14] and the MAX Bus Rapid Transit line.[15] During ski season, UTA runs buses to select ski resorts.[16] UTA continues to grow – in recent years, UTA has extended both the light rail and commuter rail network in its service area and is currently expanding the bus rapid transit system. UTA has also positioned itself as a leader in the use of technological innovation. The agency was one of the first to implement "contactless payment" allowing users to pay fares using the mobile wallet platforms, such as Google Wallet and Softcard.[17]

- **Aspirational Peer 2: Denver Regional Transit District (RTD).** The Denver metropolitan region (population 2.6 million) is anticipating rapid population and job growth in the next few decades – expecting an additional 1.4 million residents and 1 million jobs by 2035. Denver has an even higher concentration of residents than Albuquerque; 40.3 percent of the population possesses a Bachelor's degree or higher. Denver RTD's transit system includes fixed route service, express

[10] Sun Metro, *Transit Fact Sheet*. Accessed at http://www.sunmetro.net/images/factsheet.jpg on 12/16/2014.
[11] Sun Metro, *Transit Fact Sheet*. Accessed at http://www.sunmetro.net/images/factsheet.jpg on 12/16/2014.
[12] U.S. Census, *2013 American Community Survey*. Accessed at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml on 12/16/2014.
[13] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Salt Lake City, Utah, Metropolitan Area Data Tables. Accessed at http://www.bls.gov/ro7/saltlakecity_summary.htm on 12/16/2014.
[14] Utah Transit Authority, *Bus Rapid Transit Fact Sheet*. Accessed at https://www.rideuta.com/uploads/FactSheets_BRT_2012.pdf on 12/16/2014.
[15] Utah Transit Authority, *Flex Routes Fact Sheet*. Accessed at http://www.rideuta.com/uploads/FLEXRoutes_FactSheet_10_13_2014.pdf on 12/16/2014.
[16] Utah Transit Authority, First Time Riders. Accessed at http://www.rideuta.com/mc/?page=RidingUTA-FirstTimeRiders on 12/16/2014.
[17] *Metro Magazine* (December 2011), "Transit agencies turn to new, innovative contactless payment systems." Accessed at http://www.metro-magazine.com/article/story/2011/12/transit-agencies-turn-to-new-innovative-contactless-payment-systems.aspx on 12/16/2014.

routes, downtown circulator, airport shuttle, light rail, as well as paratransit.[18] Citizens across all socio-economic divisions utilize the services that RTD provides. However, as a 2011 customer satisfaction survey indicated, the average annual household income for light rail riders tended to be somewhat higher than that of bus riders.[19]

How Do We Measure Up?

Benchmarking with Peers

Benchmarking is a method for assessing performance through comparison with other similar or aspirational organizations in the same industry. Three types of metrics exist in this peer review:

- **Regional/system context metrics:** Including characteristics of the region and transit system that may help explain differences across the other metrics (i.e. the different agencies' service area size may account for much of the difference in the agencies' passenger miles traveled).

- **Operational metrics:** Including both inputs (e.g. funding) and outputs (e.g. transit density) of the different agencies.

- **Outcomes metrics:** Including the real-world outcomes (e.g. transit mode share, percent of home/jobs that are well-served by transit, etc.) that are the direct or indirect result of the agency's transit service and other mobility initiatives.

Together, these provide a fuller perspective of an agency's success in meeting its agency mission as well as meeting regional and community needs. Note that the status quo peers and aspirational peers are discussed separately in the presentation of metrics and findings below, as the lessons learned from these different types of peers are quite different.

Regional/System Context Metrics

Metrics based on the regional context and transit system context provide the overall baseline information for the benchmarking process. Context metrics are described below:

- **Regional context** – Helps contextualize the peer agencies' transit service offerings by comparing the size and the density (i.e. how many people per square mile) of the four peer agencies' service areas. Metrics are: Service Area Population, Service Area Square Miles, and Service Area Regional Density.

- **System context** - Provides insights on the total transit service level being provided by each of the four peer agencies. Service levels are shown in both absolute and relative (per capita) terms

[18] Denver Regional Transit District, Facts and Figures. Accessed at http://www.rtd-denver.com/factsAndFigures.shtml on 12/16/2014.
[19] Denver Regional Transit District, *2011 RTD Customer Satisfaction Research Results*. Accessed at http://rtd.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?Frame=&ID=1534&CssClass= on 12/16/2014.

to account for population differences across the four peer regions. Metrics are: Annual Passenger Trips, Per Capita Trips, Annual Passenger Miles, and Per Capita Miles.

Status Quo Peers

Tables 1 and 2 below show the regional context metrics (Table 1) and system context metrics (Table 2) for the two status quo peers. Each table is followed by a summary of key findings based on analysis of the respective metrics.

Table 1 Regional Context *Metrics - Status Quo Peers*

Agency / *Region*	Service Area Population[20]	Service Area Square Miles[21]	Service Area Regional Density (pop./sq. mi.)[22]
RMRTD	929,543	915	1,016
ABQ RIDE	661,629	235	2,815
Albuquerque Regional Transit[23]	*929,543*	*915*	*1,016*
SJRRC[24]	4,094,704	28	146,239
San Joaquin RTD	685,306	1,489	460
Stockton Regional Transit[25]	*4,094,704*	*1,489*	*2,750*
El Paso Transit District (TD)	*803,086*	*251*	*3,200*

[20] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[21] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htmon 12/16/2014.
[22] Population/square mileage.
[23] Assumed that RMRTD's service area statistics could be used as proxy for high-level regional analyses.
[24] Unlike the other agencies, SJRCC publishes its data under the name "Altamont Commuter Express." National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[25] Assumed that SJRCC service area and SJRTD's square mileage could be used as proxy for high-level regional analyses.

Regional Context Metrics - Summary of Findings for Status Quo Peers

- **Service Area Population:**
    - The Stockton regional population is dramatically larger than the Albuquerque or El Paso regions, potentially skewing per capita results.
    - RMRTD and El Paso are comparable in population.
    - Both ABQ RIDE and SJRTD are comparable in size, as expected.
- **Service Area and Service Density:**
    - The El Paso service area is the smallest compared to the Albuquerque and Stockton regions, since it does not provide a regional rail option. As such, its service density is the greatest when comparing across regions as well across the other transit agencies individually.

- ABQ RIDE and El Paso TD are comparable in service area, and RMRTD and SJRTD are comparable as well. This means that the El Paso regional transit is closer in size to ABQ RIDE. It should be noted that direct comparisons between the Albuquerque region and the status quo peers are not without challenges. A few caveats include the following:
    - Comparing the Albuquerque region to other peer regions (such as the El Paso region) requires aggregating/synthesizing the datasets from two transit systems (RMRTD and ABQ RIDE) to provide a complete regional profile. The italics in the table denote these regional level analyses. When referencing the Albuquerque region, it means RMRTD and ABQ RIDE together and the same with Stockton (SJRRC and SJRTD).
    - Metropolitan statistical areas and urbanized areas do not match to transit service areas geographically, meaning they are not a good replacement dataset.
    - SJRRC is an outlier. Its service population is dramatically larger than the others, which will impact per capita comparisons. This is most likely due to the fact that San Jose area is one its termini. Also, its service area reporting may not be consistent with standard practice or there is a reporting error, as its commuter rail line is 86 miles but only covers 28 square miles.

Table 2 System Context Metrics – Status Quo Peers*

Agency / *Region*	Annual Passenger Trips[26]	Per Capita Trips[27]	Annual Passenger Miles[28]	Per Capita Miles[29]
RMRTD	1,217,841	1.31	52,000,595	55.94
ABQ RIDE	13,069,274	19.75	48,244,579	72.92
Albuquerque Regional Transit[30]	*14,287,115[31]*	*15.37[32]*	*100,245,174[33]*	*107.84[34]*
SJRRC[35]	786,947	0.19	35,964,591	8.78
SJRTD	4,227,003	6.17	30,208,230	44.08
Stockton Regional Transit[36]	*6,325,435[37]*	*1.54[38]*	*66,172,821[39]*	*16.16[40]*
El Paso TD	*16,655,904*	*20.74*	*86,715,484*	*107.98*

** The ridership numbers primarily include the commuter rail operation (Rail Runner), and exclude contracted services, paratransit, and demand-response services operated by RMRTD.*

System Context Metrics - Summary of Findings for Status Quo Peers

- **Regionally:**
  - The El Paso region provides more passenger trips than the Albuquerque or Stockton regions, but the Albuquerque region logs more passenger mileage.

[26] Unlinked passenger trips from National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[27] Unlinked passenger trips divided by service area population.
[28] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[29] Annual passenger miles divided by service area population.
[30] Assumed that RMRTD's service population could be used as proxy for high-level regional analyses.
[31] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE .
[32] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE divided by RMRTD's service population.
[33] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE.
[34] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE divided by RMRTD's service population.
[35] Unlike the other agencies, SJRCC publishes its data under the name "Altamont Commuter Express" National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[36] Assumed that SJRCC service area and population could be used as proxy for high-level regional analyses.
[37] SJRCC plus SJRTD.
[38] SJRCC plus SJRTD divided by SJRTD's service population.
[39] SJRCC plus SJRTD.
[40] SJRCC plus SJRTD divided by SJRTD's service population.

- The El Paso region provides the most trips per person in its service area population, but both the Albuquerque and El Paso regions carry their passengers a similar number of annual passenger miles.

- **Commuter Rail:**

  - Even though RMRTD and SJRRC provide loosely comparable levels of passenger trips, their service area populations and area differ significantly, suggesting that the SJRRC's service area is significantly denser and its commuter rail passengers travel less distance.

  - Compared to SJRRC, RMRTD provides nearly seven times more trips per person in the service area population and its passengers travel over six times more annual passenger miles.

- **Urban Systems:** SJRTD service appears to be more geographically distributed, even though it is an urban, city-focused system. Its service area is significantly larger than any of the other status quo peer systems.

Aspirational Peers

The two tables below show the regional context metrics (Table 3) and system context metrics (Table 4) for the two aspirational peers. Each table is followed by a summary of key findings based on analysis of the respective metrics.

Table 3 Regional Context Metrics - Aspirational Peers

Agency / *Region*	Service Area Population[41]	Service Area Square Mileage[42]	Regional Density[43]
RMRTD	929,543	915	1,015
ABQ RIDE	661,629	235	2,815
Albuquerque Regional Transit[44]	*929,543*	*915*	*1,016*
UTA	*2,165,290*	*751*	*2,883*
Denver RTD	*2,619,000*	*2,326*	*1,126*

[41] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[42] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[43] Population/square mileage
[44] Assumed that RMRTD's service area statistics could be used as proxy for quick regional analyses.

Regional Context Metrics - Summary of Findings for Aspirational Peers

- Population: UTA and Denver RTD have service populations 2-3 times as large as Albuquerque's regional service population, and significantly more than the ABQ RIDE service population.

- Land/Area and Service Density:

  - UTA's regional service area is smaller than the Albuquerque region's, and provides a higher regional density (although ABQ RIDE's service density is a very close to UTA's).

  - Denver RTD's service region covers 2-3 times as much area as RMRTD's, but provides a similar service density to the Albuquerque region (and RMRTD) more generally.

Table 4 System Context Metrics – Aspirational Peers*

Agency / *Region*	Annual Passenger Trips[45]	Per Capita Trips[46]	Annual Passenger Miles[47]	Per Capita Miles[48]
RMRTD	1,217,841	1.31	52,000,595	55.94
ABQ RIDE	13,069,274	19.75	48,244,579	72.92
Albuquerque Regional Transit[49]	*14,287,115*[50]	*15.37*[51]	*100,245,174*[52]	*107.84*[53]
UTA	*42,365,345*	*19.57*	*272,249,596*	*125.73*
Denver RTD	*98,518,888*	*37.62*	*589,148,984*	*224.95*

** The ridership numbers primarily include the commuter rail operation (Rail Runner), and exclude contracted services, paratransit, and demand-response services operated by RMRTD.*

[45] Unlinked passenger trips. 2012 National Transit Database, 2012 Agency Profiles. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014
[46] Unlinked passenger trips divided by service area population.
[47] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[48] Annual passenger miles divided by service area population.
[49] Assumed that RMRTD's service area and population could be used as proxy for high-level regional analyses.
[50] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE.
[51] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE divided by RMRTD's service population.
[52] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE.
[53] RMRTD plus ABQ RIDE divided by RMRTD's service population.

System Context Metrics - Summary of Findings for Aspirational Peers

- Trips: UTA provides 3 times as many passenger trips as the Albuquerque region, but is comparable on a per capita basis to the Albuquerque region. This is because much of the regional trips are within the ABQ RIDE service area, with per capita trips that compare favorably with UTA's. Denver RTD provides nearly 2.5 times twice as many trips per capita and over 2 times the per capita miles as the Albuquerque regional.

- Passenger Miles: A similar relationship from trips arises with passenger miles across the individual agencies. At the regional level, the Albuquerque region provides less trips and passenger miles per person

Operational Metrics

Operational metrics are focused on the daily operations of the agency itself. Operational metrics are those factors that the either the region or the agency has a large degree of control over (e.g. the relative amount of local funding provided to transit or the relative cost per passenger trip), as opposed to the context the agency operates in (discussed in the previous section) or the real-world outcomes the agency hopes to influence (discussed in the next section). Operational metrics include both "system inputs" and system outputs" as follows:

- **System inputs:** Illustrates total budgets for each agency, as well as proportion of the budget that comes from local sources and proportion represented by labor costs.

- **System outputs:** Shows what level transit service densities and frequencies are provided, as well as how cost-effectively those service levels are achieved.

Status Quo Peers

The two tables below show the operational metrics for the status quo peers, including both system inputs (Table 5) and system outputs (Table 6). Each table is followed by a summary of key findings based on analysis of the respective metrics.

Table 5 Operational Inputs Metrics – Status Quo Peers

Agency / *Region*	Operating Funds Expended[54]		Local Funds [55]		Salaries, Wages, and Benefits [56]	
	Absolute Value	*Per capita*	*Absolute Value*	*Percent*	*Absolute Value*	*Percent*[57]
RMRTD	$25,040,420	$26.94	$13,028,921	52%	$1,929,726	8%
ABQ RIDE	$42,595,432	$64.38	$36,312,682	85%	$26,210,151	62%
Albuquerque Regional Transit[58]	*$67,635,852*	$72.76[59]	*$49,341,603*	*73%*	*$28,139,877*	*42%*
SJRTD	$12,365,364	$3.02	$7,982,296	65%	$1,899,480	15%
SJRRC	$30,931,121	$45.13	$17,284,044	56%	$14,524,947	47%
Stockton Regional Transit[60]	*$43,296,775*	$10.57[61]	*$25,266,340*	*58%*	*$16,424,427*	*38%*
El Paso TD	*$57,839,203*	$72.02	*$36,293,452*	*63%*	*$36,439,224*	*63%*

Operational Input Metrics - Summary of Findings for Status Quo Peers

- **Regionally:**
  - The Albuquerque region spends more on operations in absolute terms than both the Stockton region and the El Paso region.
  - On a per capita basis, the Albuquerque region spends significantly more on operations than the Stockton region. However, despite the Albuquerque region spending more on operations than El Paso region (by about $10M), the two regions

[54] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014
[55] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htmon 12/16/2014
[56] Percent is of operating funds expended. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[57] Salaries, wages, and benefits as a percentage of operating funds expended. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[58] Straight aggregation of RMRTD and ABQ RIDE.
[59] Albuquerque regional per capita is the total operating funds expended by RMRTD and ABQ RIDE divided by the service area population of RMRTD. Absent a more robust regional number, using RMRTD's service area population was appropriate.
[60] Straight aggregation of SJRCC and SJRTD.
[61] Stockton regional per capita is the total operating funds expended by SJRCC and SJRTD divided by the service area population of SJRCC. Absent a more robust regional number, using SJRCC's service area population was appropriate and also then comparable to the same for the Albuquerque region methodology.

spend about the same on a per capita basis. Interestingly, ABQ RIDE spends 2.4 times more in per capita operating funds than RMRTD.

- The Albuquerque region has the highest local contribution as a percentage of operations expenditures of any of the status quo peers, with ABQ RIDE having 85% local contribution and RMRTD having 52%.

- The Albuquerque region spends about $12M more on labor costs than the Stockton region, but about $8M less than the El Paso region. It should be pointed out that 93% of the region's transit labor costs are attributable to ABQ RIDE labor costs.

- In fact, the Albuquerque region spends the least percentage of its total operations budget (42%) on labor costs than either of its status quo peers (which spend an average of 60.5% of operations budget on labor costs). Again, this is almost entirely due to RMRTD's very low labor costs as a percentage of total operations spending: RMRTD is at 8% on this metric, while ABQ RIDE is at 62%, higher than the average of the region's status quo peers. While it isn't possible to disaggregate from the available data, this result is likely due to RMRTD's reliance on a non-union labor force as confirmed by conversations with Albuquerque region transit providers.

- **Commuter Rail:**

  - RMRTD spends a similar total on operations as the SJRRC but less than half as El Paso TD. RMRTD contributes half of its operating expenditures from local funds, whereas the others are closer to 60 percent. Much less of total operations expenditures is spent on labor by RMRTD (8%) than SJRRC (15%) and El Paso TD (63%).

  - On a per capita basis, RMRTD spends half as much on operations as SJRRC and three times less than El Paso.

- **Urban Systems:** ABQ RIDE's operating expenditures are in between SJRTD and El Paso TD, but their local contribution is 20 points higher (at the 85% level). On a per capita basis, ABQ RIDE spends about $8 less per person.

Table 6 Operational Outputs Metrics – Status Quo Peers*

Agency / *Region*	Transit Service Density: Vehicle revenue hours/ sq mi.[62]	Access: City/Urban Service Frequency Headways[63]	Cost Effectiveness		
			Farebox Recovery[64]	*Cost per passenger trip*[65]	*Cost per passenger mile*[66]
RMRTD	52.0	n/a	10.60%	$20.54	$0.48
ABQ RIDE	2,134.6	14	10.70%	$3.26	$0.88
Albuquerque Regional Transit[67]	*600.2*[68]	*n/a*	*10.70%*	*$4.73*	*$0.67*
SJRRC	721.2	n/a	34.40%	$37.99	$0.83
SJRTD	135.4	20.6	15.60%	$12.88	$0.55
Stockton Regional Transit[69]	*148.9*[70]	*n/a*	*21.00%*	*$6.84*	*$0.65*
El Paso TD	*2,789.7*	*17.2*	*17.70%*	*$3.27*	*$1.59*

** The ridership numbers primarily include the commuter rail operation (Rail Runner), and exclude contracted services, paratransit, and demand-response services operated by RMRTD.*

[62] Service Area, National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Available at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm. Accessed 12/16/2014

[63] City based values as listed in the Report. *Brookings Institution, Missed Opportunities: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America*. Accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2011/5/12%20jobs%20and%20transit/0512_jobs_transit.pdf on 12/16/2014. Service Frequency is defined as the median "headway," or wait time, for morning rush hour transit service in a block group. The overall service frequency for each metropolitan area is calculated as the median of the typical headways in all covered block groups, weighted by their working-age populations.

[64] Fare revenues divided by the total operating expenses. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.

[65] Total operating expenses was divided by annual unlinked trips. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.

[66] Total operating expenses was divided by annual passenger miles. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.

[67] Straight aggregation of RMRTD and ABQ RIDE for total values.

[68] Divided by RMRTD's service area square miles.

[69] Straight aggregation of SJRCC and SJRTD for total values.

[70] Divided by SJRTD's service are square miles.

Operational Output Metrics - Summary of Findings for Status Quo Peers

- **Regionally:**
    - The El Paso region provides 4.7 times the transit service density as the Albuquerque region and 18.7 times the transit service density as the Stockton region. However, the Albuquerque region still provides four times as much transit service density as the Stockton region.
    - The Albuquerque region has a less service frequency than either status quo peer, but note that this metric is based entirely on ABQ RIDE's service frequency data.
    - The Albuquerque region has the lowest farebox recovery rate at 11%, compared to the Stockton region at 21% and the El Paso region at 18%. Interestingly, both RMRTD and ABQ RIDE have essentially the same farebox recovery rates.
    - On cost per passenger trip, the Albuquerque region costs about 1.5 times more than El Paso but about 3 times less than the Stockton region. RMRTD's costs per passenger trip are over 6 times ABQ RIDE's, which is likely due to the RMRTD's lower service area density.
    - On cost per mile basis, the Albuquerque regional transit services costs are comparable to the Stockton region. The cost per mile for the El Paso region is about 2.4 times more than both the Albuquerque and Stockton regions. For the Albuquerque region, ABQ RIDE's cost per mile is about 1.8 times RMRTD's, which is likely due to the longer length of RMRTD trips.
- **Commuter Rail:**
    - SJRRC's transit service density is much greater than RMRTD's, but this could be due to discrepancies with the service area boundaries, rather than actual performance.
    - Interestingly, SJRRC's farebox recovery is stronger than the other systems by a significant margin.
    - However, SJRCC's cost per passenger trip and per mile (with the exception of ABQ RIDE) is much higher as well; in fact, RMRTD provides its commuter service at almost half the cost as SJRRC.
- **Urban Systems:**
    - El Paso TD provides the most transit service density, but ABQ RIDE compares very favorably and has the best service frequency of all peers.

- Both El Paso TD and SJRTD have higher farebox recovery rates (by five points minimum), meaning that a larger percentage of their operating expenses are being captured by user fees.

- El Paso TD and ABQ RIDE are comparable on cost per passenger trip, but ABQ RIDE costs significantly less per passenger mile.

Aspirational Peers

The two tables below show the operational metrics for the aspirational peers, including both system inputs (Table 7) and system outputs (Table 8). Each table is followed by a summary of key findings based on analysis of the respective metrics.

Table 7 Operational Input Metrics – Aspirational Peers*

Agency / Region	**Operating Funds Expended**[71]		**Local Funds** [72]		**Salaries, Wages, and Benefits** [73]	
	Total	*Per Capita*[74]	*Value*	*Percent*	*Value*	*Percent*[75]
RMRTD	$25,040,291	$26.94	$13,028,921	52%	$1,929,726	8%
ABQ RIDE	$42,595,432	$64.38	$36,312,682	85%	$26,210,151	62%
Albuquerque Regional Transit[76]	$67,635,723	$72.76[77]	$49,341,603	73%	$28,139,877	42%
UTA	*$218,813,193*	*$101.05*	*$0*	*0%*	*$134,684,392*	*62%*
Denver RTD	*$545,056,092*	*$208.12*	*$344,880,619*	*63%*	*$182,687,803*	*34%*

** The ridership numbers primarily include the commuter rail operation (Rail Runner), and exclude contracted services, paratransit, and demand-response services operated by RMRTD.*

[71] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on12/16/2014.
[72] National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on12/16/2014
[73] Percent is of operating funds expended. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on12/16/2014
[74] Based on service area.
[75] Salaries, wages, and benefits as a percentage of operating funds expended. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[76] Straight aggregation of RMRTD and ABQ RIDE.
[77] Albuquerque regional per capita is the total operating funds expended by RMRTD and ABQRIDE divided by the service area population of RMRTD. Absent a more robust regional number, using RMRTD's service area population was appropriate.

Operational Input Metrics - Summary of Findings for Aspirational Peers

- The Albuquerque region spends significantly less on transit than UTA and Denver RTD by $150M to $350M per year. On a per capita basis, this equates $25-125 less per person in the service area population.

- UTA doesn't provide any local funds, but that may be due to fact that technically UTA is a state agency (although its operations are limited to Salt Lake City currently). As compared to Denver RTD, the Albuquerque region spends 10% percentage points more from local funds (63% versus 73%). Although note again that there is a wide difference between RMRTD (52%) and ABQ RIDE (85%) in this level of local contribution.

- RMRTD spends significantly less on labor as a percentage of total operating expenditures (52%) than the other aspirational peers; conversely ABQ RIDE is on the high end of labor spending as a percentage of total operating expenditures (62%). But the Albuquerque region as a whole (73%) is in between UTA (62%) and Denver RTD (34%).

Table 8 Operational Output Metrics – Aspirational Peers

Agency / *Region*	Transit Density: Vehicle revenue hours/sq. mi.[78]	Access: City/Urban Service Frequency headways[79]	Cost Effectiveness		
			Farebox Recovery[80]	*Cost per passenger trip*[81]	*Cost per passenger mile*[82]
RMRTD	52.0	n/a	10.60%	$20.54	$0.48
ABQ RIDE	2,134.6	14	10.70%	$3.26	$0.88
Albuquerque Regional Transit[83]	*600.2*[84]	*n/a*	*10.70%*	*$4.73*	*$0.67*
UTA	*2,364.72*	*8.5*	*23.40%*	*$4.73*	*$0.74*
Denver RTD	*1,433.36*	*8.1*	*27.40%*	*$4.23*	*$0.71*

Operational Output Metrics - Summary of Findings for Aspirational Peers

- Regionally, Albuquerque's transit service density is significantly lower than UTA or Denver RTD. ABQ RIDE provides comparable transit density to UTA, but significantly more than Denver RTD and RMRTD. RMRTD's low density is the likely due to its large service area.

- The Albuquerque region's service frequency (access) is higher than both UTA and Denver RTD, but note that metric is based entirely on ABQ RIDE's service frequency data.

[78] Service Area, National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htmon 12/16/2014.
[79] City-based values as listed in Brookings Institution, *Missed Opportunities: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America*. Accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2011/5/12%20jobs%20and%20transit/0512_jobs_transit.pdf on 12/16/2014. Service Frequency is defined as the median "headway," or wait time, for morning rush hour transit service in a block group. The overall service frequency for each metropolitan area is calculated as the median of the typical headways in all covered block groups, weighted by their working-age populations.
[80] Fare revenues divided by the total operating expenses. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[81] Total operating expenses for the transit agency was divided by annual unlinked trips. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[82] Total operating expenses for the transit agency was divided by annual passenger miles. National Transit Database, *2012 Agency Profiles*. Accessed at http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/profiles.htm on 12/16/2014.
[83] Straight aggregation of RMRTD and ABQ RIDE for total values.
[84] Divided by RMRTD's service area square miles.

- UTA and Denver RTD both have farebox recovery percentages about 2 or 3 times higher as Albuquerque regionally and on an individual agency basis.

- Both UTA and Denver RTD have very comparable costs per passenger trip and cost per passenger mile to the Albuquerque region. ABQ RIDE costs less per trip by $1.00-1.50, but costs more per mile by 14-17 cents. RMRTD, unsurprisingly, costs 4-5 times as much per trip, but almost half as much by passenger mile due to the dominance of Rail Runner commuter rail in its service portfolio.

Outcomes Metrics (aka "on the ground" results)

Within the context of public transit, outcomes refer to the broader implications of a transit agency's efforts, such as the regional commute mode share or the number of homes or jobs that are well-served by transit (i.e. "transit accessible"). These metrics assess progress on the outcomes – or "on the ground" results – that the transit agency is interested in affecting or improving as part of its organizational mission. It should be noted that a transit agency might not have direct control over outcomes metrics; in fact transit service may be just one of many factors that influence a region's performance on any particular outcome metric.

The following outcome metrics were selected for this peer review:

- **Accessibility:** Percent of regional work trips made by a) transit and b) all non-single occupancy vehicle (SOV) modes (transit, walking, biking, and rideshare). This metric provides a sense of how many people are choosing transit and non-SOV modes across the region versus compared to driving alone.

- **Land Use:** Percent of households in the region near fixed-guideway transit (within 1/2 mile geographically), illustrating how many homes have a realistic "walkshed" access to transit.

- **Economic Opportunity**: Percent of jobs in the region within a 45 minutes transit commute, illustrating how many jobs are accessible by transit.

- **Customer Service:** Rider satisfaction (as measured by rider surveys), a fundamental metric for any consumer-facing business, assessing how happy are the agency's customers are with the transit service the agency provides. Please note that not all transit agencies peers assess their rider satisfaction.

The two tables below show the outcomes metrics for the status quo peers (Table 9) and aspirational peers (Table 10). Each table is followed by a summary of key findings based on analysis of the respective metrics.

Table 9 Outcomes Metrics – Status Quo Peers

Region	Accessibility[85]		Land Use[86]	Economic Opportunity[87]	Customer Service
	Transit	*Non-SOV*			
Albuquerque, NM	1.5%	13.8%	2.58%	52.9%	93% Approval[88]
Stockton, CA	1.6%	19.6%	3.72%	27.8%	n/a
El Paso, TX	1.5%	15.8%	n/a	29.4%	n/a

Outcomes Metrics - Summary of Findings for Status Quo Peers

- **Accessibility:** The Albuquerque region's transit mode share is comparable to its status quo peers, but its overall non-SOV share is the lowest among these peers.

- **Land Use:** Stockton has almost 1.5 times as many households regionally with fixed-guideway transit access than Albuquerque. Note that data on El Paso is unavailable and this data only included fixed-guideway service, which may skew the data as well.

- **Economic Opportunity:** The Albuquerque region does very well on this metric, providing access to jobs at almost twice the rate as its status quo peers. A recent Brookings Institute confirms this finding, noting that the Albuquerque region ranked 7th overall nationally in terms of transit access to jobs.[89]

- **Customer Service:** The Albuquerque region does very well on its customer service metric, as 93% of customers approve of the transit service they receive (note that performance on this metric is based on RMRTD data alone). In fact, RMRTD is the only agency among its status quo peer group that shares its customer service survey results.

[85] U.S. Census, *2013 American Community Survey at the MSA level*. Accessed at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml on 12/16/2014.
[86] Reconnecting America, *Are We There Yet: Creating Complete Communities for 21st Century America*. Accessed at http://reconnectingamerica.org/assets/PDFs/20121001AreWeThereYet-web.pdf on 12/16/2014.
[87] Brookings Institution, *Missed Opportunities: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America*. Accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2011/5/12%20jobs%20and%20transit/0512_jobs_transit.pdf on 12/16/2014.
[88] Rio Metro Regional Transit District, *2013 Rider Satisfaction Survey*, "Customer Service" category, available upon request from RMRTD via email to tsylvester@mrcog-nm.gov. Summary presentation accessed at https://www.dropbox.com/s/513e3udo5el2vm5/RMRTD%20Ridership%20Satisfaction%20Survey%2013.pptx?dl=0 on 12/16/2014.

Table 10 Outcomes Metrics – Aspirational Peers

Region	Accessibility[90]		Land Use[91]	Economic Opportunity[92]	Customer Service
	Transit	*Non-SOV*			
Albuquerque, NM	1.5%	13.8%	2.58%	52.9%	93% Approval[93]
Salt Lake City, UT	3.2%	18.4%	6.75%	58.9%	N/A
Denver, CO	4.4%	16.3%	3.72%	47.5%	4.2/5[94]

Outcomes Metrics - Summary of Findings for Aspirational Peers

- **Accessibility:** The Albuquerque region's aspirational peers have an average transit share 2.5 times greater. The Albuquerque region compares more favorably on non-SOV mode share, but still has the lowest non-SOV share of its aspirational peers.

- **Land Use:** Household access to transit is lowest in the Albuquerque region, as compared to the highest in UTA. Again, please note this may be more a reflection of the differential fixed-route service density in each region, rather than a reflection of transit access/density more broadly.

- **Economic Opportunity:** The Albuquerque region is comparable with its aspirational peers on this metric. In fact, the region falls almost exactly in between (the mean) these two peers: about 6 percentage points higher than Denver RTD and 6 percentage points lower than UTA.

- **Customer Service:** The Albuquerque region does very well customer service compared to the one aspirational peer (Denver RTD) that reported data on this metric: the Albuquerque region's 93% satisfaction level was well above the 84% satisfaction level of Denver RTD customers.

[90] U.S. Census, *2013 American Community Survey* (at the MSA level). Accessed at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml on 12/16/2014.

[91] Reconnecting America, *Are We There Yet: Creating Complete Communities for 21st Century America*. Accessed at http://reconnectingamerica.org/assets/PDFs/20121001AreWeThereYet-web.pdf on 12/16/2014.

[92] Brookings Institution, *Missed Opportunities: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America*. Accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2011/5/12%20jobs%20and%20transit/0512_jobs_transit.pdf on 12/16/2014.

[93] Rio Metro Regional Transit District, *2013 Rider Satisfaction Survey*, "Customer Service" category, available upon request from RMRTD via email to tsylvester@mrcog-nm.gov. Summary presentation accessed at https://www.dropbox.com/s/513e3udo5el2vm5/RMRTD%20Ridership%20Satisfaction%20Survey%2013.pptx?dl=0 on 12/16/2014.

[94] Denver Regional Transit District, *2011 Customer Satisfaction Survey*, available upon request from Denver RTD via email to marketresearch@rtd-denver.com. Accessed on 12/16/2014.

What Can We Learn from Others? - Insights Gleaned from the Peer Review

Several insights emerged from the review of the Albuquerque region's peer regions and peer transit agencies:

- **Insight 1 (from Regional Context Metrics):** As seen in Tables 1 and 3, the Albuquerque regional context appears somewhat unique compared to both its status quo and aspirational peers. With a generally smaller service area population dispersed over a generally larger service area geography, the region has about one-third service the average area density of its status quo peers and its aspirational peer UTA. The Albuquerque region's service density is about the same as aspirational peer Denver RTD, but Denver RTD is still serving 2.8 times the service population in 2.5 times the service area. It should be noted that ABQ RIDE's service density approaches the regional service density of some of the Albuquerque region's aspirational peers.

    - **Implication(s):** A low-density service area requires more resources to provide high-quality service, or it means that only low-quality service can be provided. In order to maintain and expand high-quality service, Albuquerque transit will need to:

        a) Become more efficient with existing resources if possible;

        b) Work with local jurisdictions to increase population in the areas/corridors where high-quality service is currently provided or desired in the future (in order to increase the service density to justify the expense of the higher-quality service); and/or

        c) Seek additional financial resources.

- **Insight 2 (from System Context Metrics):** As seen in Tables 2 and 4, the Albuquerque region's transit services are providing a fairly large number of trips and passenger miles compared to status quo and aspirational peers. In addition, the Albuquerque region's per capita trips and per capita miles metrics are also similar to or greater than its status quo peers and aspirational peer UTA. However, the region's aspirational peer Denver RTD provides nearly 2.5 times as many per capita trips and over 2 times as many per capita miles. Furthermore, when one disaggregates the numbers for RMRTD and ABQ RIDE, it appears that ABQ RIDE's higher service density and higher trips per capita is largely responsible for the favorable results for the Albuquerque region on the per capita trips and per capita miles metrics. In a nutshell, RMRTD provides a fewer number of rides to a larger service area population and ABQ RIDE provides many more rides to a smaller service area population; as a result, ABQ RIDE's trips per capita are much higher than RMRTD's and actually compare favorably with UTA's (an aspirational peer for the Albuquerque region). In addition, even though RMRTD trips are generally longer, the greater number of trips on ABQ RIDE compensates for the shorter length of those trips, thus ABQ RIDE's trips per capita are higher than RMRTD's.

    - **Implication(s):** One of the challenges for the Albuquerque region that must be addressed as part of the strategic vision process will be to develop strategies to increase the yield – in terms of per capita trips and per capita miles – of the regional

transit service provided. RMRTD's performance on per trip and per person metrics were generally weak compared to peers, although RMRTD performed well on a per mile basis, lower than all other peers. This will be especially important when discussing service coordination and potential agency consolidation options, because ABQ RIDE service already has a relatively high yield due to its compact, dense service area context, while RMRTD has a lower yield due to its large, low-density service area context:

a) Long-term strategies to increase yield, include RMRTD taking a leadership role in the integration of transportation and land use planning (as is being done in the *Futures 2040* Regional Transportation Plan) in order to focus most of the future regional growth in areas/corridors that are currently well-served by transit (or could be in the future).

b) In the short-term, RMRTD could increase yield by playing a more active role in three key areas:

1) Developing a coordinated TDM strategy with major employers/employment centers to develop TDM programs such as parking cash-out;

2) Developing transit-supportive mobility programs to address first/last mile access barriers; and

3) Coordinating and conditioning transit service expansions on local jurisdictions' adopting (and adhering to) transit-supportive land use plans.

- **Insight 3 (from Operational Input Metrics):** As shown in Tables 5 and 7, the Albuquerque region spends more on operations in absolute terms than both its status quo peers, more on a per capita basis than the Stockton region, and about the same on a per capita basis as the El Paso region. However, the Albuquerque region spends significantly *less* on transit than either of its aspirational peers UTA and Denver RTD: $150M to $350M less per year in absolute terms and $25-125 less per person in the service population. The Albuquerque region has the highest local contribution as a percentage of operations expenditures than any of the status quo or aspirational peers, although note that there is a wide difference between RMRTD (52%) and ABQ RIDE (85%) in this level of local contribution. In addition, the Albuquerque region's labor costs as a percentage of operations expenditures are less than any of its status quo or aspirational peers with the exception of Stockton region. It should be pointed out that 93% of the region's transit labor costs are attributable to ABQ RIDE's labor costs.

    - **Implication(s):** While the Albuquerque region's transit spending is on par with its status quo peers, better transit service in the region will require more financial resources. The transit mode shares of the aspirational peers reflect their region's commitment to significant transit funding. Fortunately, the high percentage of the Albuquerque region's transit funding that comes from local sources already demonstrates a strong commitment to transit, however the region will need to access both increased local and external funding sources. Lastly, ABQ RIDE has

much higher labor costs than RMRTD (and higher or equal to all of the other status quo and aspirational peers); this issue that will be especially important to consider when discussing service coordination and potential agency consolidation options. On balance, the assessment suggests that at a minimum there are opportunities for increased inter-agency coordination between RMRTD and ABQ RIDE to reduce costs from duplicative functions in the short-term, but that the different cost structure of the two agencies must be accounted for before potential consolidation in the long-term.

- **Insight 4 (from Operational Output Metrics):** As shown in Tables 6 and 8, the Albuquerque region has a lower transit service density than its status quo and aspirational peers, with the exception of the Stockton region. The Albuquerque region has lower (better) service frequency than its status quo peers, but higher (worse) service frequency than its aspirational peers (note again that the regional access metric does not include RMRTD data). The Albuquerque region also a significantly lower farebox recovery rate (11%) than any of its status quo or aspirational peers. On all these operational metrics, there are pronounced differences between RMRTD and ABQ RIDE due to the unique nature of the transit services they provide. For example, ABQ RIDE provides a high level of transit density and service frequency compared to RMRTD, but at a higher cost per mile than RMRTD; meanwhile RMRTD's costs per passenger trip are over 6 times ABQ RIDE's.

  - **Implication(s):** At the regional level, Albuquerque performed well on these operational output metrics given the size of its service area; but this was largely because ABQ RIDE (which provides the majority of trips in the region) has good service density and frequency. Improving RMRTD's transit service frequency in a *cost-effective* manner will require improving service area density and yield (as discussed above). Lastly, improving farebox recovery should be a priority for the Albuquerque region transit providers, as there is the likely potential to capture 15-20% of costs from farebox. Increased farebox recovery should not be pursued as a standalone approach of simply raising fares, but rather as part of a comprehensive strategy to:

    a) Improve efficiencies wherever possible (in order to make the most of existing resources); and

    b) Access additional funding sources (which will be necessary for implementation of expanded, higher-quality, and higher-frequency regional service).

- **Insight 5 (from Outcomes Metrics, aka "on the ground" results):** As shown in Tables 9 and 10, the Albuquerque region's transit mode share is comparable to its status quo peers, but its transit mode share compared to aspirational and overall non-SOV mode share compared to both status quo and aspirational is lower. Likewise, the Albuquerque region has the lowest share amongst both status quo and aspirational peers of households within ¼ mile of fixed-guideway transit (note this is more a reflection of the differential fixed-route service density in each region, rather than a reflection of household's access to all transit services). But the gap between transit-accessible housing and transit-accessible jobs also suggests that although

regional economic centers are relatively concentrated (so they can be well-served by transit), the majority of the region's housing stock is relatively low-density and dispersed throughout the region. The Albuquerque region performs better than its status quo peers and comparably with its aspirational peers in providing access to regional jobs within a 45-minute transit trip. Finally, RMRTD outperforms both status quo and aspirational peers on customer service metric, in two ways: 1) they are 1 of only 2 peer agencies to report customer service satisfaction and 2) over 93% of customers approve of the RMRTD transit service they receive.

- **Implication(s):** In order for the Albuquerque region to increase its transit mode share to the level of its aspirational peers it needs to not only provide more service, but also address the land use and TDM challenges raised above. Likewise, in order for the region to increase its non-SOV mode share, the regional transit providers need to go beyond thinking of themselves solely as transit agencies, and more of multimodal mobility providers addressing and first/last mile access barriers. To address the low number of homes in the region accessible by transit, and be able to provide cost-effective expansions of transit service, RMRTD will need to play a bigger role in coordinating with local jurisdictions land use planning and development decisions, and will need to become an active champion and resource to enable more compact, dense, transit-oriented development. It is worth noting that all of the status quo and aspiration peers (with the exception of Stockton) have aggressive land use/transit coordination and/or transit-oriented development programs.

Collectively, the above insights will inform the development of recommendations in the Strategic Vision Plan.

Postscript: Considerations for Future Peer Reviews and Ongoing Performance Monitoring

The Albuquerque region's unique regional context and unique transit portfolio make certain peer comparisons difficult. This methodological challenge reflects the fact that there are two transit agencies in the region with a diversity of services offered. For example, there are very few regions in the country with "dual" metro/regional service areas, and very few comparable commuter rail systems operating in small metro areas like the Albuquerque region (there are only approximately 25 commuter rail systems in the nation and most of them serve significantly larger metropolitan regions). As a result, there is not one single "perfect" peer for the Albuquerque region's combined transit system, but rather different types of peers for different metrics. Benchmarking the performance of the regional transit system was achieved in this peer review by synthesizing the data on RMRTD and ABQ RIDE, but it is not as robust as other potential peer review frameworks. This section discusses several considerations that were daylighted while conducting this peer review. These issues are described below and should be considered by RMRTD (or its consultants) for future/expanded peer reviews and as part of ongoing performance assessment.

- **Improving future peer reviews:** Creating a more robust framework for addressing the regional data issues will be important for RMRTD's future peer reviews. Although regional comparisons were made in this peer review (with some caveats), greater insights could be achieved through a

more robust exploration into data differences and against a larger set of peer communities and agencies. For example, future peer reviews should explore discrepancies in the data more fully, such as with SJRRC's reported service area and Utah's reported absence of local transit monies. An expanded peer review could also be done on specific types of services, such as bus rapid transit or paratransit.

- **Addressing limitations in national datasets:** Several of the national datasets just do not answer some of the qualitative and quantitative questions that RMRTD is interested in. For example, there really isn't a good measure of land use access for transit service (for non-fixed guideway), or understanding transit choice/dependency more broadly, or some of the other detailed implementation questions that RMRTD would like to explore as part of the visioning process. Most communities that have this kind of information tailored to their region have commissioned their own comprehensive studies to meet their specific research/implementation needs. For example, on the question of quantifying the Albuquerque region's relative transit accessibility, some options to address limitations in national datasets include:

    - The University of Minnesota has created a transit accessibility evaluative tool, but the latest version of the report (2014) doesn't include Albuquerque in its inventory/analysis.[95]

    - EPA's Smart Location Database could most likely provide the underlying data for a transit accessibility analysis.[96]

    - Renaissance Planning Group is also beta-testing an accessibility tool that captures the relationship between land use and transportation (including transit) and can describe differing accessibility levels and predict likely mode usage for different contexts.[97]

[95] University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies, *Access Across America*. Accessed at http://www.cts.umn.edu/research/featured/access on 3/25/15.
[96] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Smart Location Database*. Accessed at http://www2.epa.gov/smart-growth/smart-location-mapping on 3/25/15.
[97] State Smart Transportation Initiative, "Accessibility: Towards a new multimodal system performance metric" webinar. Accessed at http://www.ssti.us/Events/accessibility-towards-a-new-multimodal-system-performance-metric/ on 3/25/15.