Mission

Rio Metro collaborates to provide safe, accessible, efficient, and innovative transportation services for the benefit of our diverse local communities and the regional economy.

Vision

Rio Metro is a leader moving our region forward, connecting our diverse communities, and supporting sustainable prosperity.
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Our History

In 2003, the New Mexico legislature passed the Regional Transit District Act, authorizing the creation of multi-jurisdictional transit agencies. The following year, the legislature gave regional transit districts the authority to levy up to a one-half cent gross receipts tax. These two actions paved the way for the formation of the Mid-Region Transit District (encompassing Bernalillo, Sandoval and Valencia counties), which was certified by the New Mexico Transportation Commission in March 2005.

These early milestones were directly related to the development of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express. During that same time, the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) was proceeding with the planning, design, construction and initial operation of the Rail Runner on behalf of the New Mexico Department of Transportation. In July 2006, Rail Runner service began between Albuquerque and the Town Bernalillo, expanding south to Belen in February 2007 and north to Santa Fe in December 2008. In that same year, the Mid-Region Transit District was renamed the Rio Metro Regional Transit District and voters approved a 1/8th-cent gross receipts tax. Half of these new revenues were committed to the Rail Runner, and the remaining half were authorized to fund Rio Metro’s system at large.

With a revenue stream secured, Rio Metro assumed operation of the Rail Runner in 2009. Shortly thereafter, Rio Metro acquired member agency bus services, including the City of Belen’s, Village of Los Lunas’ and the City of Rio Rancho’s Dial-a-Ride programs, and the Sandoval Easy Express commuter bus service. Funds were also used to establish ABQ RIDE and Rio Metro bus routes that connect to Rail Runner stations and also serve outlying rural communities and pueblos.

In the last decade, Rio Metro has had to enact scheduling changes and fare increases brought on by reductions in federal and state funding for Rail Runner operations. Compounding this challenge, Rio Metro only recently amassed the $60+ million necessary to install federally-mandated Positive Train Control (PTC) technology, which will be completed by the December 31, 2020 deadline. Once Rio Metro’s financial outlook stabilizes post-PTC implementation, it can give more attention to its long-term vision for transit in the region.
Our Services

Overview
While Rio Metro’s official boundary includes Bernalillo, Sandoval and Valencia counties, its reach extends well beyond these borders. The most obvious example is Rail Runner service in Santa Fe County. However, other transit agencies, such as the North Central Regional Transit District, NMDOT Park-and-Ride and Socorro Transit, also provide vital connections from the Rail Runner to communities like Taos, Los Alamos and Socorro. Rio Metro is truly part of a larger, interconnected transit network.
As suggested by its history, Rio Metro also provides an uncommon combination of intercity, urban, suburban, and rural transit services, including the New Mexico Rail Runner Express; 10 commuter bus routes primarily serving Sandoval and Valencia Counties; dial-a-ride programs in Valencia County and the City of Rio Rancho; and the Job Access program in Bernalillo County. Combined, these services provided 927,452 passenger trips and 37,841,592 passenger miles traveled in fiscal year 2018 (July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018) as broken down by the charts below.
**New Mexico Rail Runner Express**

The Rail Runner is—by far—Rio Metro’s most popular and well-known service. Eighty-five percent of all Rio Metro’s passenger trips (787,116) and 96 percent of its passenger miles traveled (36,154,201) in FY2018 occurred on the Rail Runner. In FY2019, lifetime Rail Runner passenger trips and passenger miles are expected to exceed 12,000,000 and near 500,000,000, respectively. The relatively high ratio of passenger miles to trips reveals the Rail Runner’s most defining statistic—the average passenger trip length exceeds 45 miles, which is much farther than most similarly sized commuter rail agencies.

When service began on July 14, 2006, the Rail Runner connected only three stations: Downtown Albuquerque, Los Ranchos/Journal Center and Sandoval County/US 550. Service was extended to Los Lunas and Belen in late 2006/early 2007, and Santa Fe was reached in December 2008. Today, 22 weekday, 11 Saturday, and 7 Sunday trains connect 15 stations along an approximately 100-mile corridor from Belen to Santa Fe.

As a commuter rail service, the Rail Runner is distinguished from light rail, streetcar, heavy rail (e.g., subway) and other rail technologies, because it travels upon and shares a standard gauge railway with other freight and passenger rail operators (e.g., Amtrak and BNSF); relies on diesel rather than solely electric propulsion; provides regional connections between suburban and rural communities and urban centers; generally travels longer distances with more widely spaced stations; and can travel at high speeds (up to 79 mph). Also, ticketing, fare structures and other commuter rail operational practices are commonly different than other types of rail services.

Furthermore, as the name “commuter rail” suggests, the majority of the Rail Runner’s ridership comes from workers commuting between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. However, the Rail Runner also serves New Mexicans and visitors throughout central and northern New Mexico through its extended network of partner transit providers. In effect, the Rail Runner helps link nine counties and over 60 connecting bus routes.
Bus Routes

Ten Rio Metro bus routes fan out from Rail Runner stations and other transit centers to serve outlying neighborhoods and rural communities. Four connect the Sandoval County communities and pueblos of Cuba, Jemez, Jemez Springs, San Ysidro, Zia, Santa Ana, Kewa, Cochiti, and Cochiti Lake with northern Rio Rancho, Bernalillo, and the Sandoval County/US 550 and Kewa Rail Runner stations. All or portions of these routes were originally branded as the Sandoval Easy Express, and were operated by the Mid-Region Transit District under contract with Sandoval County.

In Valencia County, two routes connect Los Lunas and Belen neighborhoods to their respective Rail Runner stations, and one connects the Los Lunas Rail Runner Station to the UNM Valencia Campus. In 2018 a route was opened from Belen to the Alvarado Transportation Center (ATC) to supplement the lack of midday Rail Runner service in Valencia County.

In Bernalillo County, one route links the Central and Unser Transit Center in Albuquerque to the Route 66 Casino Hotel. Another route connects the Sandoval County/US 550 Rail Runner Station to the ATC to replace an early morning Rail Runner train that was discontinued in FY2012.

In FY2018, these routes (and other discontinued routes) accounted for 64,188 passenger trips (seven percent of Rio Metro’s ridership) broken down by the chart below.
**Dial-a-Ride**

Generally categorized as “demand response” service, dial-a-ride is a shared-ride service that does not operate on a fixed route, but instead delivers passengers directly from their desired origin to their desired destination; however, passengers are required to schedule their trip by reservation. Rio Metro operates two dial-a-ride programs that were acquired from member agencies and generally still reflect the operating characteristics established by those agencies. Valencia County Dial-a-Ride was previously operated by the City of Belen and Village of Los Lunas. It provides curb-to-curb service to riders of all ages and abilities across most of Valencia County, and is especially vital to persons living in rural communities such as Meadow Lake and El Cerro Mission who lack access to a vehicle. In 2018, this service was expanded to the Pueblo of Isleta through a cost-sharing partnership with the Pueblo.

Rio Rancho Dial-a-Ride, formerly Rio Transit, provides door-to-door service within Rio Rancho, to the Cottonwood area, and to medical appointments in Albuquerque. This service is limited to seniors ages 62+ and individuals with disabilities ages 18+ who are Rio Rancho residents. In FY2018, both services combined to provide 67,539 passenger trips (seven percent of Rio Metro’s ridership).

**Job Access**

The Job Access program is a continuation of MRCOG’s Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program. JARC was previously a distinct federal program to provide taxi-based work transportation for low-income individuals. While the federal program has been discontinued, Rio Metro continues to provide this service for Bernalillo County residents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, those living within 150 percent of the Federal poverty level, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. In order for an individual to use the Job Access program, bus service must not be available at the time of their trip, travel time by bus would take 1.5 hours or more, or the nearest bus stop to their home or work is greater than one-quarter mile. A person can only be enrolled in the program for up to one year and may also be issued an ABQ RIDE bus pass when appropriate. In FY2018, the Job Access program provided 8,609 passenger trips (one percent of Rio Metro’s ridership) through contractor zTrip.
ABQ RIDE

Since FY2011, Rio Metro has annually contracted with its largest transit partner, ABQ RIDE, through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to provide services within Bernalillo County and southern Sandoval County, including:

- Bus routes 222, 250 and 251, which connect the Bernalillo County Station and the Sunport, the Downtown Albuquerque Station and the Sunport, and northwest Albuquerque/Rio Rancho and the Los Ranchos/Journal Center Station, respectively;
- Extending bus routes 96 and 155 from the Northwest Transit Center to the intersection of Southern and Unser boulevards in Rio Rancho during peak hours; and
- Funding support for other routes such as the 790 Blue Line Rapid Ride.

This partnership also allows all passengers in possession of a valid Rail Runner ticket to ride ABQ RIDE buses for free, and makes arrangements for “bus bridge” service in emergency situations that would require transport of Rail Runner passengers by bus.

In FY2018, Rio Metro contributed $4,755,000 to ABQ RIDE, which accounts for a 9.4 percent share of ABQ RIDE’s approximately $50.6 million operating budget and 9,659,486 fixed-route passenger trips. Also, the MOU in more recent years has not restricted the use of Rio Metro’s contribution to specific routes—giving ABQ RIDE greater flexibility to leverage these local dollars against other funding sources.

It would not be fitting to conclude this section without also noting that while Rio Metro carries about one-tenth the passengers of ABQ RIDE, both agencies serve similar numbers of passenger miles traveled because of trip length. In FY2017, the average ABQ RIDE fixed-route passenger trip length was 3.3 miles; the average Rio Metro passenger trip length was 40.5 miles. This key difference reflects how and where each agency operates. ABQ RIDE serves the urban and suburban context of Albuquerque where origins and destinations are relatively close to one another. Rio Metro, however, tends to provide longer, regional and rural connections that link distant communities and transit systems.
Our Board of Directors

Structure

The Regional Transit District Act requires that the board include at least one member from each member government, and prohibits one government from holding a majority of seats if the district includes more than three governments. Expanding upon the Act, Rio Metro’s contract and bylaws allocate seats based on population, which results in 20 board members distributed across the following governments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Government</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Albuquerque</td>
<td>Isaac Benton</td>
<td>Councilor, District 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cynthia Borrego</td>
<td>Councilor, District 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diane Gibson, Chair</td>
<td>Councilor, District 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don Harris</td>
<td>Councilor, District 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Klarissa Peña</td>
<td>Councilor, District 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lawrence Rael</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Belen</td>
<td>Jerah Cordova</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernalillo County</td>
<td>Maggie Hart Stebbins</td>
<td>Commissioner, District 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debbie O'Malley</td>
<td>Commissioner, District 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charlene Pyskoty</td>
<td>Commissioner, District 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Bernalillo</td>
<td>Jack Torres</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Bosque Farms</td>
<td>Wayne Ake, Vice Chair</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Corrales</td>
<td>David Dornburg</td>
<td>Councilor, District 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Los Lunas</td>
<td>Charles Griego</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque</td>
<td>Donald Lopez</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Rio Communities</td>
<td>Mark Gwinn</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Rio Rancho</td>
<td>Jim Owen</td>
<td>Councilor, District 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Tyler</td>
<td>Councilor, District 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandoval County</td>
<td>Michael Meek</td>
<td>Commissioner, District 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valencia County</td>
<td>Charles Eaton</td>
<td>Commissioner, District 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bylaws also allow the board to confer non-voting, associate membership to another government that provides financial contributions or connecting/complimentary transit services, or that is significantly impacted by Rio Metro’s services. Only two governments, Isleta Pueblo and the North Central Regional Transit District, have been granted associate membership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Government</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isleta Pueblo</td>
<td>Kathy Trujillo</td>
<td>Transportation Division Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Regional Transit District</td>
<td>Anthony Mortillaro</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Full member governments must appoint as many elected officials to the board as they have seats. Board members, in turn, may appoint unelected officials as alternates to serve in their absence. Nevertheless, the Regional Transit District Act requires that only elected officials may vote to acquire land or issue bonds. Board members are expected to serve at least one year, unless their term in office expires or they are replaced by their member government.

Responsibilities & Opportunities

The Board of Directors’ authority is established by the Regional Transit District Act. While the Act allows the board to delegate certain powers by resolution, only the board can:

- Adopt board policies and procedures;
- Approve the purchase of land by negotiated sale;
- Take legal action that does not involve traffic or toll violations;
- Establish fare policy;
- Issue bonds; and
- Approve route or schedule changes that affect 25 percent or more of Rio Metro’s system.

The Act also gives the board other powers that are further detailed in Rio Metro’s contract and bylaws. These documents set the rules and expectations for:

- Establishing committees;
- Scheduling, advertising, calling, conducting and adjourning board and committee meetings;
- Appointing officers;
- Meeting attendance;
- Compensation as allowed by the Per Diem and Mileage Act, including the reimbursement of reasonable expenses;
- Adopting an annual budget;
- Conducting an annual audit;
- Procuring materials, equipment, labor, constructions and professional services, and legal counsel;
- Entering into joint use and service agreements with other governments;
- Investing; and
- Selecting an official seal.

In light of these responsibilities and the demands of their elected office, the potential exists for a board member to passively “rubber stamp” what comes before them or merely ensure that Rio Metro adheres to its basic fiduciary obligations. However, a good board member will contribute in more meaningful ways.

By the nature of their elected office, board members know the pulse of their communities. Thus, they serve as a conduit for their constituents—Rio Metro’s customers—by advocating for their transportation
needs at board meetings and other Rio Metro forums. Conversely, board members can promote the value of Rio Metro’s services back in their local communities.

Board members also serve by identifying ways that Rio Metro and its member governments can align plans and capital projects to benefit both agencies. For example, a member government may be drafting a land use plan along a corridor served by a Rio Metro bus route. In this case, questions about appropriate transit-supportive land use densities, multi-modal design standards and pedestrian/bicyclist “last mile” connections can be addressed so that the existing bus route and the land uses it serves function more harmoniously.

In addition to being a good reference for board members, the American Public Transportation Association’s Transit Board Member Handbook highlights one other key role for board members—system innovation. An engaged board can greatly impact the future of their organization by implementing Rio Metro’s long-term strategic vision.

**Relationship to the Chief Executive Officer**

Per Rio Metro’s founding contract, the Chief Executive Officer oversees the district’s day-to-day affairs and may be hired or removed by the board. The CEO is required by the contract to “...see that all policies, directions and orders of the board are carried out”; however, the contract also stipulates that such direction must come from the board in total: “Unless the board has authorized such exercise of authority, decisions or instruction of individual board members or committees shall not be binding on the Chief Executive Officer.”

These clauses highlight the unique relationship between the CEO and the Board of Directors. The CEO’s role is to take action on policies adopted by the board. In doing so, the CEO has day-to-day control over many of the topics covered in this handbook, such as hiring employees, contracting and operating services, communicating with customers, developing a budget, auditing financial records and administering board meetings. This frees the board to focus on more broad-based policies that will contribute to Rio Metro’s long-term success.

**Board Meeting Expectations**

The Board of Directors currently meets monthly on the third Friday at noon in the MRCOG boardroom. Board meetings are led by the Chair or Vice Chair, who are voted to their respective offices each June. The Chief Executive Officer, Director and most managers are present, and the Office Manager/Board Liaison records the minutes. All meetings allow for public comment.

A majority of board members (10 of 20) constitutes a quorum, and is required for the board to take action on items subject to their authority. To help ensure a quorum, each board member, upon appointment to the board, must select an alternate(s) to attend board meetings in the event of their absence. When an absence arises, it is the board member’s responsibility to notify and arrange for their alternate’s attendance.

To ensure compliance with the State of New Mexico Open Meetings Act, the board adopts an Open Meetings Resolution each May or June that includes the meeting schedule for the upcoming fiscal year. Each meeting’s agenda packet is typically finalized and emailed to the board three days prior to the meeting, and, in the event of a cancellation, notice is also distributed by email.
Our Employees

Although Rio Metro is an independent agency, its main office is located at the MRCOG building. This is owed, in part, to MRCOG’s development and management of the Rail Runner prior to Rio Metro’s existence. Because of this legacy, MRCOG’s Executive Director continues to serve as Rio Metro’s Chief Executive Officer. Rio Metro and MRCOG also still pool resources by sharing communications, finance, legal, human resources, information technology and administrative personnel. However, the Director and five managers are employed full time by Rio Metro to oversee the following:

- Assistant Transit Director, Rail: Rail Runner operations, facility maintenance, capital improvements, safety, dispatching and customer service;
- Assistant Transit Director, Bus: Contracted and directly-operated bus operations, including Rio Metro fixed routes, Valencia County Dial-a-Ride, Rio Rancho Dial-a-Ride and Job Access program;
- Marketing Manager: Marketing and advertising, travel demand management and graphic design;
- Planning and Development Manager: Short- and long-range planning and capital project management; and
- Senior Finance Manager: Budget, grants, purchasing, accounting, payroll and NTD reporting.
Employees positioned under these managers work in several locations across Rio Metro’s service area. Administrative, customer service, Job Access, finance, marketing, and planning employees work on various floors at the MRCOG building in Albuquerque. Valencia County Dial-a-Ride employees are located on the 2nd floor of Los Lunas Transportation Center. Rio Rancho Dial-a-Ride employees are located at the Sandoval County transit building at the La Plazuela de Sandoval complex. Rail Runner operations employees are housed out of the rail yard on Iron Ave. west of Broadway Blvd. and a small building near the Los Ranchos/Journal Center Station, but are commonly in the field to perform their duties.
Our Partners

Mid-Region Council of Governments

MRCOG was established in 1969 to provide a regional planning forum for central New Mexico governments. In addition to Rio Metro, MRCOG is home to several important organizations including Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico, the Economic Development District and the Rural Transportation Planning Organization.

Of all MRCOG-affiliated organizations, Rio Metro coordinates most closely with the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO). MRMPO receives funds from Rio Metro to carry out transit-related planning tasks such as surveys and transportation modeling for studies and grant applications. However, MRMPO is primarily responsible for completing federally-mandated transportation plans and programs that involve and affect Rio Metro, including:

- Developing and adopting the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area’s long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), most recently Futures 2040;
- Selecting transportation projects to receive federal funding through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process; and
- Establishing roadway access and other regional transportation policies.

MRMPO plans and programs are approved by the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB), of which Rio Metro is a member. And, while many of Rio Metro’s board members serve on the MTB and other MRCOG boards on behalf of their member governments, Rio Metro is a distinct agency over which neither the MTB nor MRCOG have authority. Understandably, with several meetings at MRCOG each month, board members should not hesitate to contact Rio Metro staff if they have questions about the relationship of the MTB and Rio Metro’s Board of Directors should any confusion arise.

Rio Metro also participates on three staff-level technical committees that serve the MTB. The Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) reviews and provides recommendations on items scheduled to come before the MTB. In turn, the Transportation Program Task Group is a standing technical committee that is primarily responsible for drafting and amending the TIP prior to TCC review and MTB approval. Lastly, the Congestion Management Process Committee satisfies a federal mandate to identify congested corridors and develop strategies to improve the transportation network’s efficiency.
North Central Regional Transit District

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) is a key contributor to Rio Metro’s success. The NCRTD’s iconic blue buses provide connections from the Rail Runner to Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe and Taos counties. Equally as important, the NCRTD dedicates nearly half of its gross receipts tax revenue to fund the Rail Runner, as Santa Fe County is not within Rio Metro’s district boundary. Recent contributions from NCRTD have hovered around $2.2 million annually. Because of Rio Metro and the NCRTD’s close relationship, Rio Metro’s Transit Director is an ex officio member of the NCRTD Board of Directors. Likewise, NCRTD’s Executive Director serves as an associate member of Rio Metro’s board.

New Mexico Department of Transportation

As the owner of all Rail Runner right-of-way, equipment and infrastructure, the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) necessarily has a close relationship with Rio Metro. Formalized most recently in a 2013 memorandum of agreement (MOA), Rio Metro is generally responsible for all Rail Runner operations, maintenance, construction, marketing, scheduling, fare policy and collection, procurement, planning, budgeting, accounting and other day-to-day activities. Rio Metro is also required to report on these activities to the New Mexico State Transportation Commission every July. In return, NMDOT allows use of its right-of-way and equipment, directs certain funds to the Rail Runner, provides project support as needed, and serves as lead negotiator with railroads and other parties. The MOA has no termination date. Instead, it requires 12 months written notice of termination by either party, except in cases of emergency. To keep up-to-date on MOA activities, NMDOT Rail Bureau and Rio Metro staff usually meet bi-weekly.
In addition to the Rail Runner, NMDOT and Rio Metro also partner to provide bus service. Rio Metro is one of many subrecipients of Section 5310 (seniors and individuals with disabilities) and Section 5311 (rural) federal formula grants that are administered by NMDOT. Rio Metro also provides funding for a portion of NMDOT Park-and-Ride’s Purple Route, which, in concert with the Rail Runner, connects Albuquerque to Santa Fe and Los Alamos.

**Herzog Transit Services**

While Rio Metro is responsible for operating the Rail Runner on behalf of NMDOT, Rio Metro does not directly operate the Rail Runner. Rather, Rio Metro contracts with Herzog Transit Services to carry out three primary responsibilities: train operations, maintenance of equipment and facilities, and maintenance of way. Herzog Transit Services also manages other commuter rail services, including the Altamont Commuter Express (Stockton, CA) and the Trinity Railway Express (Dallas, TX).

Although they are not Rio Metro employees, Herzog’s engineers, conductors, train attendants and security officers arguably have Rio Metro’s most visible roles. Besides ensuring that our customers have a great experience on the Rail Runner, they are responsible for train startup and inspections, operating the train safely and efficiently in accordance with the schedule and regulations, collecting fares, performing passenger counts, and many other tasks.

Behind the scenes, but no less important, Herzog’s maintenance crews ensure that the Rail Runner remains in a state of good repair. At the most basic level, the Rail Runner’s “rolling stock”—9 locomotives, 9 cab cars and 13 coach cars—need to be fueled, cleaned, and inspected on a daily basis. As the need for repairs arises, many can occur outside of the shop with minimal impact to operations. However, preventative maintenance and more significant repairs may require a vehicle to be rotated out of service or placed in the shop mid-day or overnight. Major repairs and overhauls can even necessitate transporting the vehicle back to the manufacturer. For these reasons, the Rail Runner has enough vehicles to maintain an appropriate spare ratio in the event that a vehicle must be removed from service.
Maintaining the “way”—the track, signals and other infrastructure—is equally important to the Rail Runner’s success. Herzog crews perform routine maintenance such as replacing ties and ballast; repairing bridges, culverts and fencing; and conducting inspections. They also ensure that all signals and switches are operating correctly to maintain the safety of train passengers and road travelers. Herzog’s contract expires September 2020, but may be renewed through September 2021.

All Aboard America

While Rio Metro directly operates all Valencia County bus services and the Rio Rancho Dial-a-Ride, Rio Metro contracts some bus routes to All Aboard America. All Aboard America currently operates all Sandoval County bus routes, route 366 within Bernalillo County, and routes between Bernalillo and Sandoval County. They also operate NMDOT’s Park-and-Ride routes. All Aboard America’s contract expires in 2020 with an opportunity for renewal through 2023.
Our Customers

Because Rio Metro exists for the benefit of its passengers, it is vitally important to know who rides Rio Metro’s services, where and how they are traveling, and what they think of their experience. This is done in a variety of ways.

In 2012, with funding support from Rio Metro, MRMPO performed a randomly sampled on-board survey of Rail Runner passengers to update its travel demand model. Key findings include:

- Of morning trips, 58 percent were to work and 19 percent were to college/university;
- 56 percent accessed the train by driving, carpooling or being dropped off, while 37 percent accessed the train by walking or biking;
- 52 percent of trips required a transfer to/from another transit service;
- Less than 3 percent live in households without access to a vehicle;
- 77 percent had a vehicle available to them on the day of their trip, but chose instead to take the train; and
- 67 percent are employed and 25 percent are students.

While these results are what one might expect of a commuter rail service, they stand in remarkable contrast to ABQ RIDE, whose finer-grained bus network better serves those who rely on transit as their primary means of transportation. This claim is underscored by the following chart, which shows that Rail Runner passengers have greater rates of vehicle availability, but instead choose to forego driving (primarily because of cost as identified in other surveys). Consequently, Rail Runner ridership is likely more susceptible to the variable costs associated with driving (e.g., lower gas prices correlate to lower ridership).
While MRMPO’s survey more rigorously focuses on passenger demographics and travel patterns for the Rail Runner, Rio Metro’s marketing section conducts a biennial customer survey across Rio Metro’s bus and rail services that more broadly captures passengers’ experiences. This survey is particularly useful for tracking Rio Metro’s performance and identifying changes that can improve passenger satisfaction. The results of the customer survey are reported to the board as they become available.

Day-to-day, Rio Metro’s customer service agents communicate with passengers in a variety of ways, most notably by telephone and email, but also face-to-face in the office and at community events. They are the first point of contact for many passengers. For example, when trains and buses are delayed or schedules are changed, it is their responsibility to alert passengers in the following ways:

- Message boards at all stations;
- A recorded message on the Rail Runner toll-free line;
- Text messages for specific train numbers and bus routes;
- Twitter posts @RioMetroAlerts;
- Posts on the front page of Rio Metro’s website;
- Facebook, though only for major service disruptions or schedule changes; and
- Email to 10,000+ opt-in subscribers, again for major service disruptions and schedule changes.

Customer service agents also manage the bike locker program, monitor security cameras, reconnect passengers with lost items, and much more.
Our Finances

As a regional transit district, Rio Metro has the authority to levy a one-half cent gross receipts tax within its district boundary. To fund existing services, voters have approved a one-eighth cent gross receipts tax, half of which must be committed to the Rail Runner. Also, as noted previously, Rio Metro receives gross receipts tax contributions from the North Central Regional Transit District to support Rail Runner operations within Santa Fe County.

Gross receipts taxes provide a relatively stable source of local income. However, they are generally tied to the health of the regional economy and can fall during economic downturns, placing added pressure on Rio Metro’s services when they may be needed most.

Fares are a second source of local funding. Although fare revenue makes up a significantly smaller share of Rio Metro’s local revenue than gross receipts tax, it is the funding source over which the Board of Directors has the most immediate control. For example, during the Great Recession, many transit agencies were forced to increase fares and/or cut services to offset declines in other tax-based revenues. Rio Metro similarly increased fares in 2011 to offset the loss of certain federal funds for operations. In contrast, some agencies, such as the North Central Regional Transit District, charge no fares to stimulate ridership and eliminate the expense and boarding delay associated with fare collection.

While Rio Metro has the authority to issue bonds as another source of local revenue, it does not because it has relatively few assets to serve as collateral. This is primarily because all Rail Runner vehicles and right-of-way are owned by the State of New Mexico and not Rio Metro. However, NMDOT collects fees from Amtrak and BNSF for their use of NMDOT-owned tracks. Per the MOA with NMDOT, these fees are passed along to Rio Metro on a reimbursable basis.

The largest source of revenue comes from federal grants, several of which are determined by formulas based on operating and regional characteristics (e.g., vehicle revenue miles, directional route miles, passenger miles traveled, population). Federal funds that Rio Metro commonly receives directly from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) or as a sub-recipient from NMDOT include:

- 5307 Urbanized Area (capital and operations);
- 5307 Small Urbanized Area (populations less than 200,000 for capital and operations);
- 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Senior and Individuals with Disabilities;
- 5311 Other-than-Urbanized (rural) Areas (capital, operations and administration);
- 5337 State of Good Repair (capital maintenance of railroad rolling stock and way);
- 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities (capital);
- Section 130 Railroad-Highway Crossings; and
- Flex funds (e.g., CMAQ, STP-U) received through the TIP process.

While Rio Metro could not operate its services without federal funding, accepting these funds comes with substantial obligations above and beyond state and local requirements. Civil rights, environmental, labor, procurement, property acquisition, records retention and safety, are just some of the categories of additional FTA regulation. Rio Metro is also subject to project and National Transit Database reporting, and a comprehensive federal review and inspection every three years (i.e., the triennial review).
Each fiscal year, Rio Metro separately budgets these revenues for both rail and bus services. Excluding the influence of Positive Train Control (see next section), in FY2020 the Rail Runner will receive approximately $42.2 million in revenues ($18.9 million gross receipts tax and other local funds; $2.0 million fares; $2.2 million Amtrak/BNSF fees; $19.2 million federal funds). Rail expenditures will total $27.2 million for operations and maintenance and $7.0 million for capital improvements, leaving approximately $8 million in carryover.

Bus services will receive $23.8 million in revenue ($15.0 million gross receipts tax and other local funds; $80,000 fares; $8.8 million federal funds). Bus expenditures will total $17.3 million for operations and maintenance and $1.1 million for capital improvements, leaving approximately $5 million as a cash reserve.

The budget appears before the board for approval each May, packaged as part Rio Metro’s Short Range Plan. First adopted in 2012, the Short Range Plan is updated annually and has been revised over the years to now include four components:

1. **Rail and transit budgets.** In addition to detailing the upcoming fiscal year’s budget, this section also estimates revenues and expenditures for the following six years. This not only helps anticipate future needs, but also better aligns Rio Metro’s budget with the six-year horizon of MRMPO’s Transportation Improvement Program.

2. **New Mexico Rail Runner Express Capital Plan.** The NMRX Capital Plan satisfies the requirement in Rio Metro’s memorandum of agreement with NMDOT to jointly develop a five-year minimum capital maintenance plan/capital improvement plan for the NMRX system. Critically, by its direct link to Rio Metro’s Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan, the NMRX Capital Plan also satisfies the federal requirement that projects receiving Section 5337 State of Good Repair funding be included in a recipient’s TAM Plan.

3. **Transit Capital Plan.** The Transit Capital Plan assesses Rio Metro’s non-rail capital needs, including planning and operational initiatives that may ultimately result in future capital investments. This plan also includes an evaluation of Rio Metro’s non-revenue (i.e., service) vehicle needs, regardless of the mode they serve.

4. **Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan:** The ICIP prioritizes unfunded and underfunded projects vetted in the previous plans for inclusion in the State of New Mexico’s coordinated ICIP. The State’s ICIP is the primary process whereby local government projects are considered for capital outlay and other state funding.
Positive Train Control

Of any project in Rio Metro’s short history, PTC implementation has and will continue to dominate board and staff time and tie-up Rio Metro’s financial resources for the next several years. Therefore, it is of vital importance that every board member understands the scope of this endeavor.

In 2008, a Metrolink (Los Angeles) commuter train and Union Pacific freight train collided head-on, killing 25. The National Transportation Safety Board subsequently determined that the Metrolink engineer failed to stop at a red signal, likely the result of texting. On the heels of that incident, Congress passed the Rail Safety Improvement Act, which required Class I freight railroads and commuter railroads to implement PTC—a nascent technology designed to prevent train collisions, overspeed derailments, work zone incursions and train movements through improperly positioned switches—by December 31, 2015. Unfortunately, when the legislation passed, Congress made no corresponding appropriation to help commuter railroads fund the PTC mandate, nor was PTC technology ready for implementation. For these reasons, most commuter railroads, including the Rail Runner, were unable to meet the 2015 deadline. Congress subsequently extended the deadline to 2018, with the opportunity for two additional years on a case-by-case basis.

Rio Metro’s efforts in recent years have focused on 1) amassing the $60 million required to install PTC, and 2) pursuing an extension through December 31, 2020. In the case of the latter, Rio Metro received conditional approval of a temporary main line track exception from FRA in the fall of 2019 after installing additional infrastructure (e.g., electric locks on switches to/from the mainline) and modifying operating policies and procedures. With respect to funding, Rio Metro was also awarded $29.4 million and $2.5 million grants from FRA in 2018. In conjunction with a $10.9 million State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) loan and other federal, state and local funds, Rio Metro has amassed the $63.1 million necessary to bring the project to fruition prior to the 2020 deadline.

Over the next year-and-a-half, Rio Metro’s contractor, Xorail, will be implementing an Interoperable Electronic Train Management System (I-ETMS) PTC solution on the Rail Runner corridor between Belen and Santa Fe. I-ETMS relies on GPS and constant radio/Wi-Fi communication between a back-office server, dispatching software, wayside signals and switches, and locomotives to prevent the aforementioned accidents from occurring. While potentially more costly than other technologies, I-ETMS was developed by a consortium of the major Class I railroads and is most compatible with Amtrak and BNSF, Rio Metro’s two tenant railroads.
Our Strategic Vision

Unfortunately, the weight of PTC arrived at a turning point in Rio Metro’s history. Through its first decade, Rio Metro and its partners had accomplished much to be proud of, including successfully launching and operating the New Mexico Rail Runner Express; expanding bus service throughout the three-county service area; facilitating an integrated transit network that spans multiple transit providers; and providing new transit options to better meet the region’s transportation needs. Recognizing these successes—and the opportunity for transit to play an even greater role in the region’s prosperity—Rio Metro’s board adopted a Long-Term Strategic Vision in late 2015 to lay the foundation for the next decade and beyond. This vision focuses on six core themes:

1. **Exceptional Customer Experience.** Our customers come first in all we do.
2. **Transformative Regional Services.** We provide a range of services to meet our region’s diverse needs.
3. **Strong Transit-Centered Communities.** Our services help shape our communities for the better.
4. **Sound Financial Stewardship.** We are good stewards of the public resources entrusted to us.
5. **Innovative Programs & Partnerships.** We think outside the box and seek collaboration always.
6. **Industry-Leading Knowledge & Practice.** Our people take pride in leading the region forward.

Underneath each theme are strategies and “tactics” that the board and staff will pursue in the coming years. Likely the most significant tactic is the creation of the region’s first transit network and service plan that spans all transit providers. This plan would respond to continued calls throughout the visioning process for new routes, increased frequency on existing routes, more off-peak and weekend service, better integration between providers, and services appropriately scaled to each community’s needs.

Realizing a more robust regional transit network and seeing other significant vision tactics through to fruition is presently a difficult prospect in light of PTC’s demands on the budget and staff resources. However, as that project comes to a conclusion and its long-term maintenance costs become more apparent, the board will need to consider how to more substantially re-engage the vision. Funding for new and expanded services; addressing the changing transit needs of its member agencies; and evolving relationships with partners like MRCOG and ABQ RIDE are but a few overarching and overdue issues that will require the board’s attention.
Appendix A: Staff Contacts

General Inquiries
If you have questions about what you’ve read, suggestions for ways we can improve our services in your community, or any other concerns, we encourage you to contact Rio Metro’s Director or MRCOG’s Executive Director. Either can then direct you to the most appropriate employee.

Terry Doyle, Rio Metro Director
(505) 843-1701
tdoyle@mrcog-nm.gov

Dewey V. Cave, MRCOG Executive Director
(505) 247-1750
dcave@mrcog-nm.gov

Board Meetings
For questions regarding board meetings (schedules, agendas, attachments, minutes, etc.), please contact:

Barbara Thomas, Office Manager/Board Liaison
(505) 247-3616
bthomas@mrcog-nm.gov

Public Relations
Rio Metro’s Communications Manager is here to help you respond to media requests, and also to spread the word in your community about our services.

Augusta Meyers, Communications Manager
(505) 724-3626
ameyers@mrcog-nm.gov

When talking with the press, you are welcome to use this handbook as a quick reference. At minimum, it is important to remember that Rio Metro’s services are truly region wide—spanning the boundaries of our member communities to connect residents with jobs, classrooms, social services and other transit providers. The following bullets also lists some basic, but comprehensive, talking points that explain the range of services offered by Rio Metro.

- Rio Metro’s bus and rail services serve almost one million passenger trips annually.
- Nearly 40 million passenger miles are traveled on Rio Metro’s system each year.
- Rio Metro operates the New Mexico Rail Runner Express, which serves 15 stations from Belen to Santa Fe.
- Partnerships with other local transit systems provide over 60 free bus connections to and from the Rail Runner.
- Rio Metro operates 10 bus routes and 2 dial-a-ride programs.
- The Rio Rancho Dial-a-Ride program is provided for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The Valencia County Dial-a-Ride program is open to anyone.
- Rio Metro’s fleet includes 9 locomotives, 22 cab and coach railcars, 42 buses and 3 minivans.
- Rio Metro contracts with All Aboard America for 7 additional buses that primarily serve Sandoval County.
Appendix B: Recommended Resources

If you wish to dive more deeply into the topics covered in this handbook, please consider the following resources:

**American Public Transportation Association Transit Board Member Handbook (August 2018)**
Prepared by the nation’s leading transit association, this handbook addresses issues common to transit boards, including the roles and responsibilities of board members, the job of the chair, evaluating board performance, selecting a CEO, and much more.

**Bylaws of the Rio Metro Regional Transit District (April 2012) / Mid-Region Transit District Governmental Unit Contract (March 2005) / Mid-Region Transit District Certification (March 2005)**
Rio Metro’s bylaws establish rules for budgeting and finance; the official seal; and Board of Directors’ committees, meetings, conduct and business, and membership. The bylaws’ authority flows from the contract and certification that created the Mid-Region Transit District.
https://www.riometro.org/253/Rio-Metro-Board (scroll to “Board Resources”)

**National Transit Database**
As a recipient of federal funds, Rio Metro is required by the Federal Transit Administration to report operating and financial information to the National Transit Database (NTD). In turn, the FTA publishes data sets and summary profiles for each urban transit agency, which allow agencies to evaluate their performance and compare themselves to their peers.
https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd

**New Mexico Rail Runner Express Project Development History (October 2009)**
What did it take to make the Rail Runner a reality? This report provides a comprehensive overview of the Rail Runner’s origins, and is particularly helpful for understanding what went into some of the earliest decisions. Topics include rolling stock acquisition, negotiations with BNSF, selection of the preferred route into Santa Fe, station development, branding and naming, and capital and operating costs.

**Paseo del Norte High Capacity Transit Study: Alternatives Analysis Report (October 2014)**
The *Paseo del Norte High Capacity Transit Study* evaluates various alternatives to connect northwest Albuquerque and Rio Rancho to the Journal Center/I-25 corridor via Paseo del Norte. This analysis recommends bus rapid transit as the appropriate technology, identifies a locally preferred alternative, and estimates capital and operating costs. Entry into the FTA’s Small Starts project development process is not anticipated at this time, as the board has given greater priority to the UNM/CNM/Sunport BRT project.
Regional Transit District Act (2003)
Chapter 73, Article 25 of the New Mexico Statutes authorizes the creation of regional transit districts and establishes the laws that govern them.
http://public.nmcompcomm.us/nmpublic/gateway.dll/?f=templates&fn=default.htm

Rio Metro Regional Transit District Long-Term Strategic Vision (November 2015)
Rio Metro’s Long-Term Strategic Vision presents a bold, forward-thinking, consensus vision for transit’s role in the Albuquerque region. The plan recommends strategies and implementation tactics framed around six core themes: exceptional customer experience, transformative regional services, strong transit-centered communities, sound financial stewardship, innovative programs and partnerships, and industry-leading knowledge and practice.
https://www.riometro.org/252/Rio-Metro-Strategic-Vision

Rio Metro Regional Transit District Short Range Plan, Addendum 7 (May 2019)
Originally adopted in 2012 and updated annually, the Short Range Plan includes four key components: the annual budget and six-year budget projections, New Mexico Rail Runner Express Capital Plan, the Transit Capital Plan, and the Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan.
https://www.riometro.org/DocumentCenter/View/254/Rio-Metro-Regional-Transit-District-Short-Range-Plan-Addendum-7-PDF

Rio Metro Regional Transit District Website
Rio Metro’s re-designed website is easy to navigate, providing quick access to Rail Runner and bus schedules, fares, maps, station information, and more. The marketing section also updates the home page with the latest news, events, promotions and any temporary schedule changes or alerts.
http://riometro.org/

Title VI (Civil Rights)
Rio Metro is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participating in, denied the benefits of, or discriminated against when using our services on the basis of race, color, national origin or any other characteristics protected by law. Notice of Rio Metro’s Title VI policy is posted in all vehicles, and the process for filing a Title VI complaint is available on our website.
http://riometro.org/315/Title-VI-Non-Discrimination-Notice

UNM/CNM/Sunport Study: Alternative Alignments Identification and Assessment (March 2014)
This assessment is the culmination of a four-year process to determine the appropriate transit technology (bus rapid transit) and select a locally preferred alternative for a high-capacity transit system connecting UNM, CNM and the Sunport. This report will serve as the basis for a forthcoming request to enter the FTA’s Small Starts project development process.
Appendix C: Board Member Directory

Wayne Ake, Vice Chair
Mayor, Village of Bosque Farms

Isaac Benton
Councilor, District 2, City of Albuquerque

Cynthia Borrego
Councilor, District 5, City of Albuquerque

Jarah Cordova
Mayor, City of Belen
David Dornburg
Councilor, District 4, Village of Corrales

Charles Eaton
Commissioner, District 4, Valencia County

Diane Gibson, Chair
Councilor, District 7, City of Albuquerque

Charles Griego
Mayor, Village of Los Lunas
Klarissa Peña
Councilor, District 3, City of Albuquerque

Charlene Pyskoty
Commissioner, District 5, Bernalillo County

Lawrence Rael
Chief Operating Officer, City of Albuquerque

Jack Torres
Mayor, Town of Bernalillo
Kathy Trujillo
Transportation Division Manager
Isleta Pueblo
(Associate Member)

Robert Tyler
Councilor, District 3, City of Rio Rancho
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