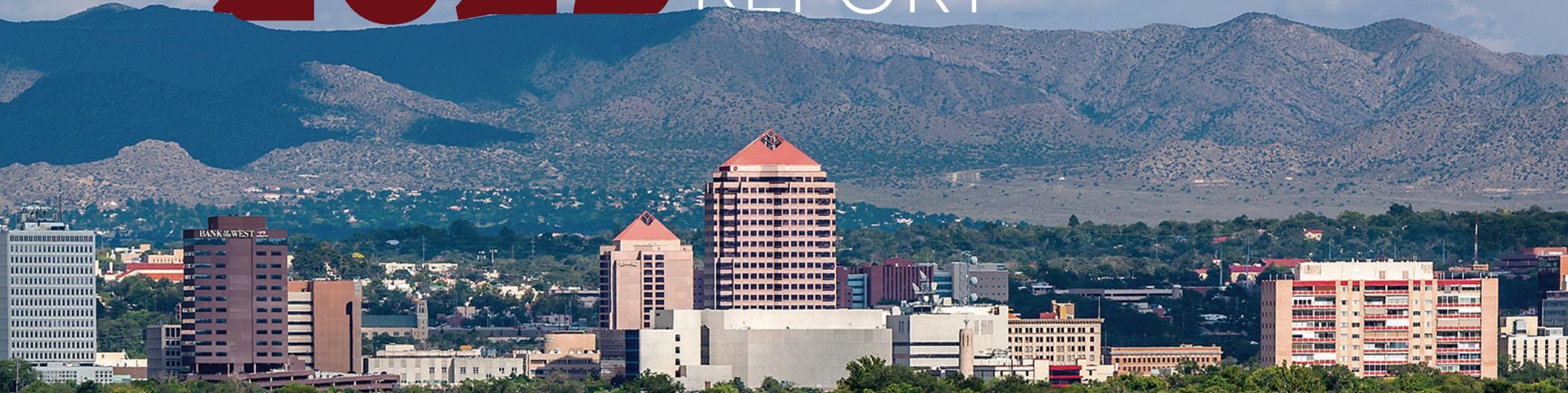


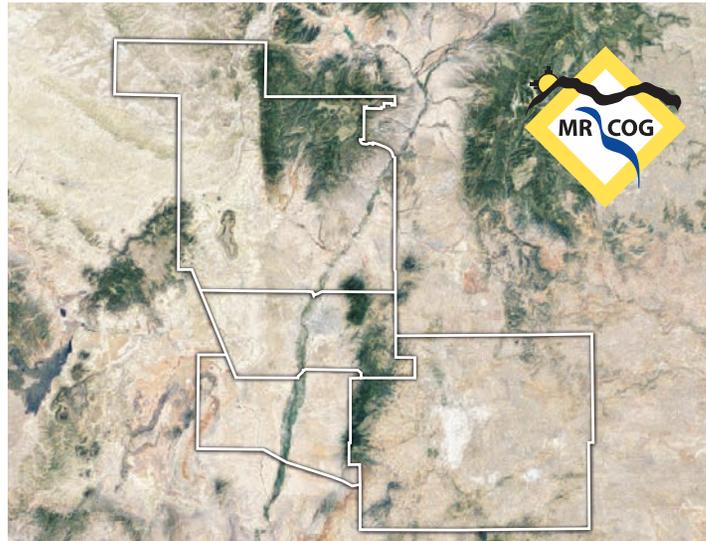
# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Mid-Region Council of Governments







*The Mid-Region Council of Governments provides planning services for the counties of Bernalillo, Valencia, Torrance, Sandoval, and southern Santa Fe in Central New Mexico in the areas of transportation, agriculture, workforce development, land-use, water, and economic development.*

### **A WORD FROM MRCOG BOARD CHAIR BARBARA BACA**



It is encouraging to arrive at the half-way point of my term as Board Chair for the Mid-Region Council of Governments and be able to reflect on the immense amount of progress we have made in the region.

I look toward to the second year as MRCOG Board Chair. I am focused more than ever on the fact that if we work together to meet the challenges of the region, we create greater opportunities for all of our communities to reach their full potential.

If there is any truth to the saying that there is strength in numbers, then we need look no further for that example than the one set here at the Mid-Region Council of Governments.

We have worked together as a region to do the important planning and adoption of the TIP which is the mechanism for allocating and programming the region's limited transportation resources. We have collaborated to assist employers and jobseekers with much needed training, education, and support to strengthen the region's workforce. And of course, we have promoted important economic development projects that benefit local governments and the region as a whole.

So, here's to another year of getting things done for all of our communities – both large and small. I trust in the collaborative process, and even more so, I trust in those with whom I serve to help build on the successes of our region – no matter how diverse our respective needs and priorities are.

Best,  
Barbara Baca

# A Message from the Executive Director

As I flip through the pages of this year's 2023 Annual Report, I am reminded how critical the data we collect and monitor here at the Mid-Region Council of Governments is to our region. With more than 15 years under my belt, I can look back and see that the COG has been consistently able to apply a reasonable approach to the challenges we face as a region, however large or small.

To that end, I am grateful to our staff and their diverse expertise. It is because of their knowledge that we are able to identify potential solutions to many of those challenges, and tackle them head on, together, in a truly collaborative fashion.

Still feeling the residual effects of emerging from the pandemic, our article on Population and Housing reminds us that central New Mexico is no stranger to national trends when it comes to the growing imbalance between housing prices and what a typical household can afford. And yet, I am encouraged to see our elected officials and member governments support important initiatives aimed at bolstering our economy and workforce in an effort to help all those who live, work and play in this great region.

Rarely is a challenge presented that we are not able to address collectively—be it through life-enhancing workforce programs, game-changing economic development projects, or critical transportation funding mechanisms—all of our communities' work on these initiatives together and as a whole.

While we're on the topic of important initiatives, there are many examples of these over the past year that are worth a mention. Among them, we need look no further than the success of our New Mexico Workforce Connection programs, which to date have provided hundreds of trainings to support job-seekers and employers in the central region, as well as on-the-job opportunities and work-based learning programs. The 8th Annual Hiring Heroes Event—a special gathering designed to cater to veterans—afforded nearly 150 individuals a chance to meet face to face with prospective employers and showcase their skills and experiences.

Our region's vets were also highlighted in a special pilot program sponsored by Rio Metro, as three separate trips were organized this past Spring to provide a unique opportunity to ride the New Mexico Rail Runner Express to visit loved ones interred at the Santa Fe National Cemetery. Needless to say, Rio Metro was busy this past year with all kinds of things from programs such as these to the completion of construction of a multipurpose trail along the railroad tracks in the Town of Bernalillo that not only greatly improves safety in the area but also enhances walking and bicycling conditions along the rail corridor as well.



**Dewey V. Cave**  
**Executive Director**  
Mid-Region Council of Governments  
Rio Metro Regional Transit District

**I FEEL VERY FORTUNATE THAT WE HAVE SUCH A ROBUST AND TIRELESS GROUP OF FOLKS LEADING THE CHARGE—BOTH FROM OUR EXPERT STAFF AS WELL AS ALL THOSE WHO SERVE ON OUR MRCOG/RMRTD BOARDS**

Whether it's Rio Metro or our MPO, you can rest assured that the wheels of progress are turning in a forward motion! This past year, the MPO finalized the development of the 2024-2029 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area. The FFY 2024-2029 TIP programs substantial funds into the transportation amounting over \$1-billion dollars in federal, state, and local funds for transportation improvements to move people, goods, and ultimately benefit the economy of our region.

We also have an updated Regional Transportation Plan, thanks to the efforts of our RTPO, which provides much-needed transportation planning and technical assistance to areas outside of the Albuquerque Metro boundary. Among other projects, our RTPO staff has been working with the New Mexico Tourism Department to promote the Salt Missions Trail And Scenic Byway.

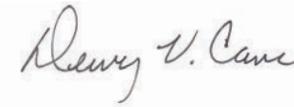
These outreach endeavors dovetail nicely with our region's economic development efforts—which also draw attention to some of our areas most notable attractions. For example, Albuquerque's largest and very popular Downtown Growers Market could be expanding to a year-round event thanks to a \$200 thousand MRCOG-facilitated EDA Grant aimed at creating a local food campus with both manufacturing and classroom space.

So, you see, there are lots of exciting things happening in central New Mexico – whether in the area economic development, workforce, transportation and more! As I look toward what milestones and challenges the next year will bring as MRCOG/RMRTD Executive Director, I am reminded that the journey is not about “me” but about “we.”

And there is one thing that is certain, I feel very fortunate that we have such a robust and tireless group of folks leading the charge—both from our expert staff as well as all those who serve on our MRCOG/RMRTD boards—I have much to be grateful for.

So, in closing, let me say that I look forward to the prospect of another year of sitting down together, rolling up our sleeves and getting down to business with our regional partners to strengthen and foster the collective vision that serves us all.

Sincerely,

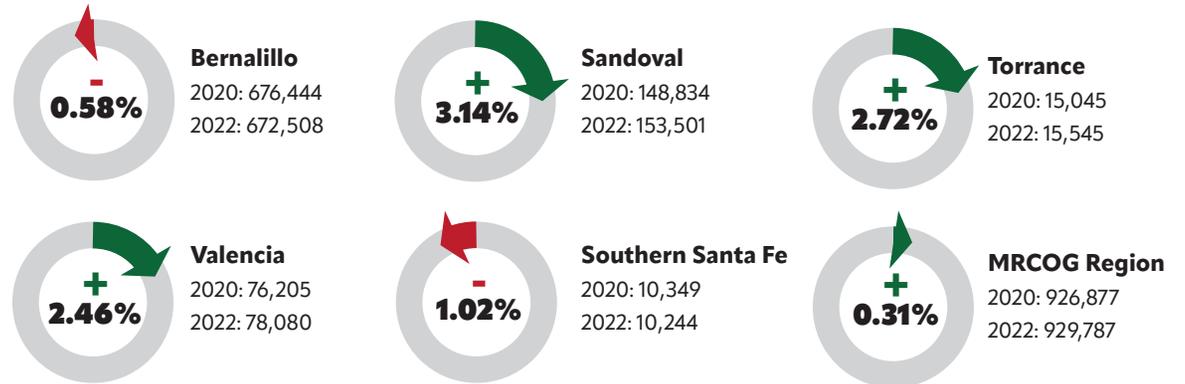


# Population and Housing Dynamics: A Growing Mismatch

Over the past year, the topic of housing has taken center stage in our local and national media. Housing plays a key role in issues related to public safety, health and healthcare, transportation access, and job stability. It is fundamental to both quality of life and economic opportunity. This article highlights recent population and housing trends in the Middle Rio Grande Region to highlight how trends related to housing are playing out at the local level.

## Population Growth, MRCOG Region, 2020-2022

Source: US Census



### POPULATION GROWTH

Sandoval County is leading the region in population growth, followed by Valencia and Torrance counties. Southern Santa Fe County and Bernalillo County are experiencing recent population loss. Taken as a whole, population growth in the region has been relatively flat overall for the past several years.

After WWII, the Middle Rio Grande region underwent a population boom. Between 1970 and 2010, the pace of growth remained high, with the population increasing by over 20 percent in each decade. However, over the past decade, the region has experienced a dramatic slowdown. According to recent Census data, the region grew by just three percentage points between 2010 and 2020. The catalyst for this was the Great Recession, which triggered an outflux of workers and their families from the region. While recent data shows that net migration is positive once again, it is still nowhere near historical levels.

The region has also experienced a significant decline in births and increase in deaths, a trend seen nationwide, which have combined to reduce population growth in the region even further.

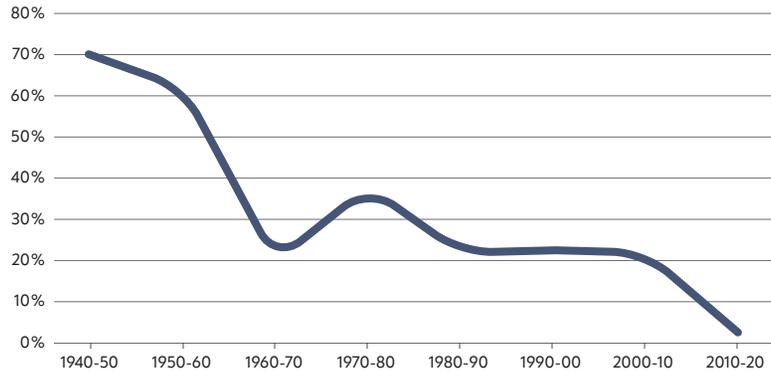
### HOUSEHOLD GROWTH

While population growth has been minimal, new household formation has continued. Household formation occurs when a member of an existing household, or someone previously unhoused, purchases or rents a home of their own. When children leave their parents' home, new couples start families, seniors downsize, and when previously unhoused persons find housing, a demand for housing is created.

Adding to pressures on available housing stock is that the size of the average household continues to decline. With 2.4 persons per household, households today are smaller than ever. In addition, approximately 119,000

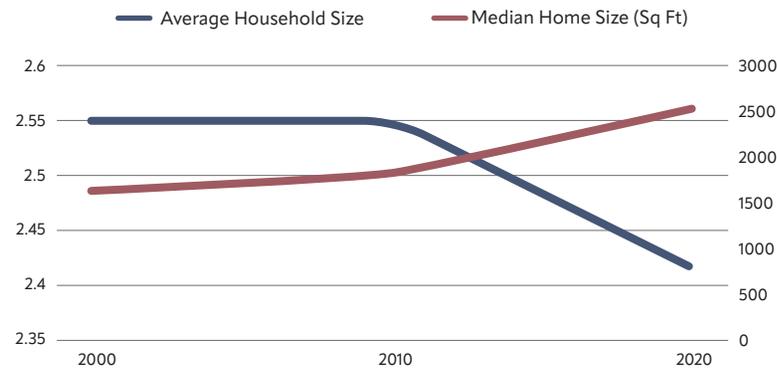
### Pace of Population Growth, MRCOG Region, 1940-2020

Source: US Census



### Housing Size and Household Size, MRCOG Region, 2000-2020

Source: US Census, Zonda



people live alone. That's 32 percent of all households. This percentage expected to increase as the region ages—among the population 65 and older, 44 percent live alone.



### HOUSING SIZE

Even though household size has *decreased*, the size of new homes has actually *increased*. Between 2010 and 2020, the average new home grew from 1,800 to 2,500 square feet.\* These homes are likely being filled by growing families and families who are moving in from outside the region. However, it is also likely that this trend is leaving a sizable gap in new housing options for small and one-person households.

### HOUSING COSTS

There is a clear and growing mismatch between housing prices and what a typical household can afford, contributing to the reality that housing remains out of reach for many.

Single family detached housing prices are at an all-time high. Reasons include limited housing supply, rising costs of construction materials, supply chain disruptions, and increased competition among buyers. Additionally, a steep rise in mortgage rates have provided yet another obstacle to would-be home buyers.

The home resale market makes up about 85 percent of total housing sales in the region, with new construction making up the rest.\* The average resale price for an existing single-family detached home in 2023 was \$406k—a 22 percent increase over the previous two years. Over the same time, the number of resales fell noticeably as prices continued to rise.

The situation is similar among new single family home construction as the average home price was up 16 percent in 2023 over the previous two years at \$411,855, while sales

THERE IS A  
**CLEAR AND GROWING MISMATCH**  
BETWEEN  
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[...]

declined.\* In addition, half of new homes currently under construction in the region will be priced over \$400,000.\*

The multi-family rental market is also experiencing record high prices. In 2023, average rents are \$1,189—a 14.4 percent increase in just two years. While multi-family vacancies dropped shortly after 2020, they have risen over the past year as rents continued to climb.

**COST BURDENED**

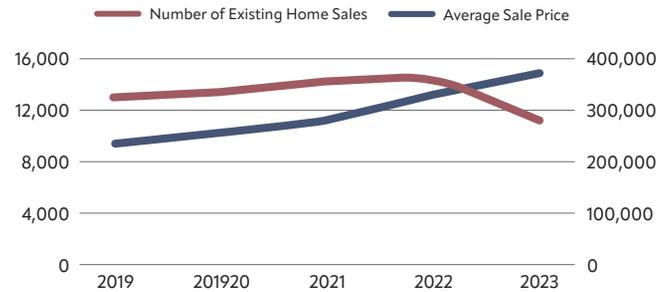
Rising housing costs have not been supported by a commensurate rise in wages for most workers, particularly in lower-paying industries. Wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that after adjusting for inflation, average wages in the region were lower in 2022 than they were in 2020. The Albuquerque Business First publication recently reported that the median annual pay in New Mexico was the lowest in the nation, the only state below \$40,000. While area home prices and mortgage rates have grown, the average paycheck has not, meaning households looking for housing are finding it increasingly difficult to find a home they can afford.

Approximately 111,000 of the region’s households (30 percent of all households) are considered cost burdened, meaning that they spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing. This burden is heaviest among renters, and especially low-income renters.

Households that earn below 50 percent of the area’s median income spend about 58 percent of their earnings on rent. This means that there is less money available for other daily needs such as food, medicine, and transportation. These households are particularly susceptible to crossing the threshold into homelessness.

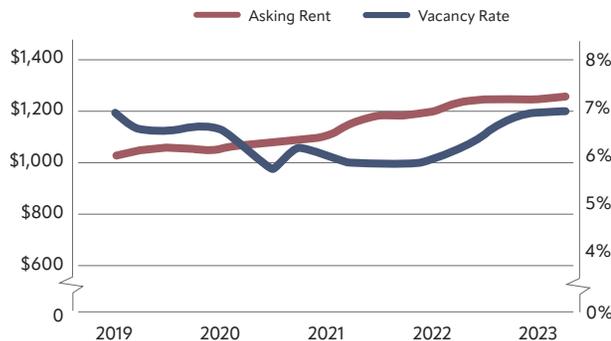
**Single-Family Home Sales and Sale Price, ABQ Metro Area**

Source: Greater Albuquerque Area Realtors



**Multi-Family Rent and Vacancy, ABQ Metro Area**

Source: CoStar



\* data provided by Zonda Housing and Greater Albuquerque Area Realtors

**\$378**

Average Resale Price  
Existing Single-Family Detached Homes

**\$398**

Average Sale Price  
New Single-Family Detached Homes

**>\$400**

Average Sale Price  
Half of New Homes Under Construction

IN 2023, AVERAGE RENTS ARE \$1,189,—A **14.4 PERCENT INCREASE** IN JUST TWO YEARS.



## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The current housing shortage is compounded by a mismatch between available housing and demographics. It is critical that efforts to provide new housing occur in tandem with the aim of offering more affordable options.

MRCOG applauds the strong civic leadership among our member agencies in their efforts to increase housing options throughout the region. For example, the City of Albuquerque's Housing Forward ABQ initiative allows Accessory Dwelling Units in land zoned for single family residences, and conversions of old hotels/motels into affordable apartments.

Below are some strategies that are being used across the nation to increase the amount of affordable housing.

- Increase financing tools for diverse housing options
  - Provide incentives for rehabilitation or adaptive reuse of existing buildings
  - Provide subsidies for the development of affordable housing
  - Lower the bar of entry to homeownership through lending programs
  - Investigate solutions that will bring cost- predictability among renters
  - Support creative housing models such as land banks, community land trusts, housing cooperatives, etc.
  - Allow Accessory Dwelling Units to be built permissively
  - Expedite permitting and waive fees for specific housing types
  - Remove building height restrictions in appropriate areas like activity centers
  - Reduce parking restrictions and off-street parking requirements
  - Reduce impact fees and utility connection costs to affordable housing projects
  - Reduce minimum lot sizes for small homes
  - Increase awareness among community members by sharing success stories
-



# Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico

## Serving Business and Job Seekers in the Middle Rio Grande Region

The Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) works collaboratively with multiple workforce programs, education entities, local public bodies and other workforce-based organizations throughout the Central Region serving job seekers and employers. WCCNM has had success in assisting WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) participants in work based learning activities. Below are some examples of our programs as well as several success stories.



### APPRENTICESHIPS

- Collaborated with Napa Auto Center Group, which consists of 38 local independent dealers. They have a nationally-registered apprenticeship for Automotive Technicians; we are working to provide them with on the job trainings (OJT) and Internships.
- Provided 104 trainings to employed non-union construction trade apprentices to support their employer with the cost of the related classroom training for apprenticeship provided through their sponsor, Associated Builders and Contractors of New Mexico (ABC-NM).
- Participated in the Kick-off of "Advancing Careers in Trades" a pre-apprenticeship Program sponsored by Meta and Fortis Construction at the Los Lunas Data Center.
- Provided opportunities for non-registered apprenticeships through companies such as Abraxas Electric.
- Partnering with local construction trade unions, such as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the local Iron Workers Union, and the local Carpenters Union to support them with WIOA programs and grow the pool of workers in the trades.

### INTERNSHIPS

This program year, 20 interns were placed with 16 different businesses. All are thriving; honing their skills in a real work environment. Many employers find great candidates through this program.

- Facebook Career Connections partnered with us on a pilot program to assist minority-owned small businesses by offering training and a social media and marketing intern. Facebook provided the training and WIOA provided a wage for the intern during this 12-week program.
- Tau Technologies has brought on five interns from among IT boot camp graduates and local college recruits.

### ON THE JOB TRAINING (OJT)

OJT provides up to six months of training to newly hired individuals. This work-based learning program is our most popular. It helps both those who need to refresh skills and those who need to gain new skills while allowing them to bring in an income. These positions are full-time. Employers are reimbursed for half of the salary for the first months. WIOA has provided 174 OJT opportunities during the past year.



## HIRING HEROES EMPLOYMENT EVENT

Recently, the WCCNM organized the 8th annual Hiring Heroes Employment Event, a special gathering designed to cater to veterans but open to the wider public as well. The event witnessed a remarkable turnout, with more than 40 employers and a range of resource-providers in attendance.

The primary objective of the event was to recognize the unique needs and skills of veterans and to create a supportive environment where these heroes could find meaningful employment opportunities. Additionally, the event also welcomed members of the community who have struggled to find jobs.

On Wednesday, April 26, the event unfolded at the American Legion Post 13 in Albuquerque. The venue provided a fitting backdrop for the event's purpose and created a sense of camaraderie among participants. Close to 140 individuals actively seeking employment took part in this event, demonstrating the significant demand for job opportunities in the region.

By bringing together a diverse array of employers and job seekers, the event acted as a bridge, facilitating connections and fostering meaningful interactions. Participants had the chance to engage directly with prospective employers, exchange information, and showcase their skills and experiences.

The Hiring Heroes Employment Event proved to be a valuable initiative, aligning employers with talented individuals who have served the nation or faced employment challenges in the community.



## Three Sisters Kitchen Awarded \$200K EDA Grant

### Could Lead to Expansion of Downtown Growers' Market

In early June of this year, Albuquerque-based non-profit community food learning center Three Sisters Kitchen (TSK) was awarded a \$200,000 Economic Adjustment Assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) toward the design and development of a downtown local food campus. The award represents a big step forward toward creating a space where good food, diverse communities and economic opportunity can come together and thrive in one place.



"Investing in a community planning process for a downtown local food campus ensures that what we build together will serve local farmers, ranchers, food producers and eaters in the most relevant way possible", said Anzia Bennett, Executive Director, Three Sisters Kitchen.

Three Sisters Kitchen says the investment will empower local growers and food producers to leverage their energy resources to help diversify and bolster the local economy. As the Economic Development District for the region, the MRCOG was pleased to support Three Sisters Kitchen in their efforts to obtain the much-needed EDA funding for the project.

Additionally, Three Sisters Kitchen and the Downtown Growers' Market are collaborating to develop a Downtown Local Food Campus that will address the significant growth and programming needs of both organizations. Now in its 27th year, the Downtown Growers' Market is the city's largest farmers' market.

"This partnership is an exciting next step in creating economic opportunity for our communities", said Lola Bird, Special Projects Manager, DowntownAbq MainStreet and Arts and Cultural District. "With this campus, the Market will finally be able to grow into Albuquerque's only year-round market, while also expanding its capacity to host the growing number of small businesses that are rotated, wait-listed or rejected due to the current site limitations."

Three Sisters Kitchen has graduated more than 50 aspiring manufactured foods entrepreneurs since 2018 and is facing increasing demand to expand its food business training program and provide additional food manufacturing support to a growing number of new and emerging food businesses, as well as expanding public programming centered on community health, nutrition, and local food systems engagement.

Local farmers say that being able to process the produce they grow into shelf-stable, value-added products will be crucial to increasing income opportunities, market outlets and managing over-supply. "Having more access and support in creating these products will be incredibly beneficial for the success and longevity of our farm", said Anita Adalja, Ashokra Farm and TSK Food Business Training Program Graduate and Downtown Growers' Market vendor.

In addition to in-kind support by the MRCOG, other supporters of the project include the Albuquerque Community Foundation, Daulton Family Foundation, Thornburg Foundation, and New Mexico MainStreet.



## CARES ACT, ARPA...AND NOW SUPPLEMENTAL DISASTER FUNDING

As communities in the MRCOG region continue to take advantage of recovery efforts put forth by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) the past few years, such as CARES Act funding of 2021, ARPA funding of 2022, the big news in 2023 was the EDA's announcement this past Spring that Congress was releasing \$3 billion of Supplemental Disaster funding across the U.S. to support long-term economic recovery and resiliency in the aftermath of disasters. Under this announcement, EDA will make awards in regions impacted by hurricanes, wildfires, flooding, and other Presidentially declared major natural disasters throughout the United States (FY2021-FY2022).

When we think of recent disasters in our own state in the past couple of years, what comes to mind for many are TV news images of the devastating fires that occurred in both northern and southern New Mexico last year. That said, in April of 2022 Valencia County saw its own devastating blaze when the "Big Hole Fire" broke out in the Belen Bosque, burning 904 acres, threatening residents, animals, houses, and consuming more than 75 percent of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area.

Clearly, there is no silver lining to losing a good portion of a significant community asset such as Whitfield, but the fact that a Federal Disaster Area was declared due to that fire means that communities within Valencia County can apply for funding provided they have projects that directly address locally led recovery and resiliency efforts.

To date, there are at least a few communities in the central region (Valencia County and Sandoval County) that are planning to submit applications to the EDA with very specific projects that aim to address the economic health and resiliency of the area. Applications need to be submitted by the end of 2023.

# COVID Impacts on Traffic and Commuting

## COVID May Have Lasting Impacts on Traffic in the Region

It has been over three years since the COVID Pandemic first began. And, although the stay-at-home orders have long since passed and the Federal Public Health Emergency Declaration has been lifted, MRCOG has identified certain trends in its traffic monitoring data, at least one of which is very likely a permanent condition affecting the working and commuting behavior of travelers within the metro region. In keeping with this series on COVID's impacts on traffic and associated factors, now that we have at least three years of data, we can start to see patterns emerging and can identify changes that might be here to stay. Time will tell.



The impacts of the pandemic have been felt across all aspects of daily life. We have seen the effects on personal health, recreational activities around town, and local business activity. In the area of transportation, our research on travel conditions through 2022 has revealed some notable changes in travel patterns in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA):

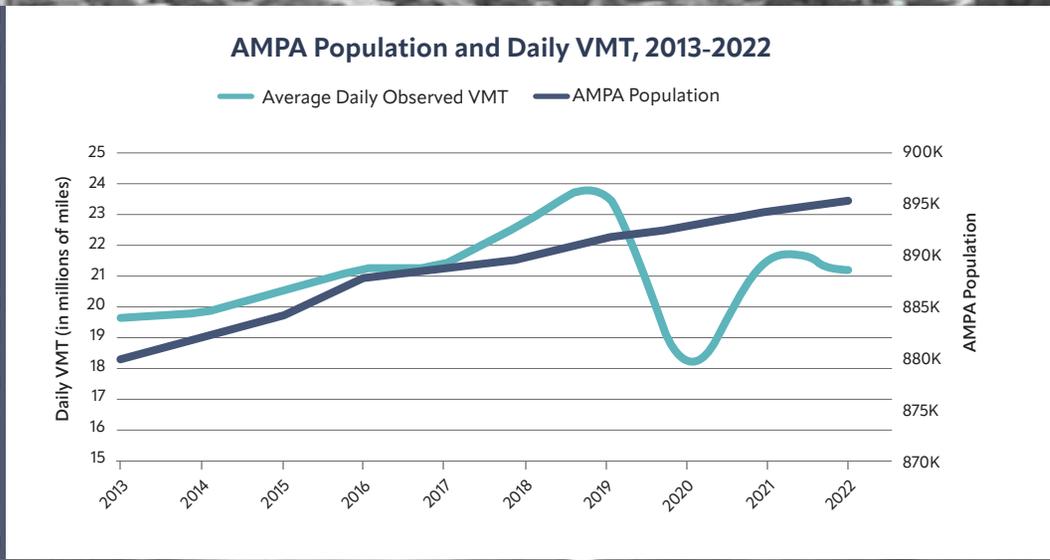
1. An immediate drop in regional traffic volumes in 2020, followed by an increase, but not a return to pre-COVID levels, despite a steady increase in population.
2. A noticeable rise in the percentage of folks that work from home, despite a drop in regional employment.

The annual number of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) took a big hit in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. In 2021 and 2022, VMT increased but stopped short of reaching pre-pandemic levels. This while the AMPA's population kept growing at a steady rate.

Factors that affect this flattening of the VMT growth-curve include a slowdown in economic activity, lethargic employment growth, and a rise in virtual activities ranging from online meetings, shopping, banking, education, and, of course, work-related activities. Studies show that while virtual meetings might miss out on the intimacy of face to face in-person meetings, they enable the sharing of ideas among wider audiences and increase participation and contribution.

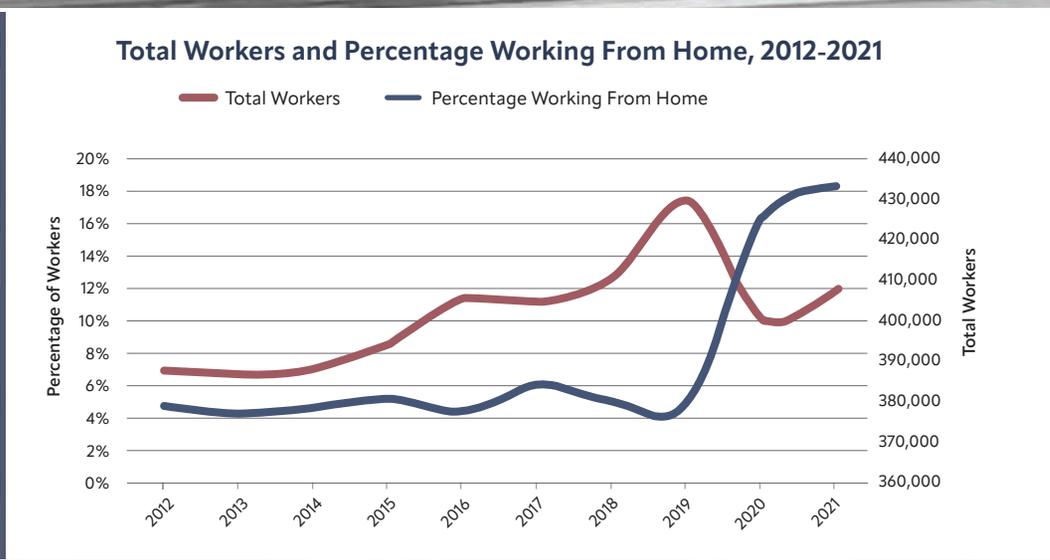
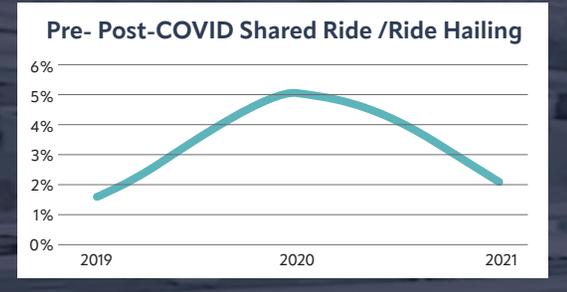
A study by Think Remote (January, 2023) reports that remote meeting share increased 60 percent since the pandemic began. Remote work and associated online activities have proven convenient, and have improved access and reduced VMT. Many public and private sector employers have since expanded their offerings of virtual/telework and online meetings considerably; all contributing to the observed reductions in area VMT.

One of the most noteworthy impacts the pandemic on travel behavior in the AMPA has been the observable rise in the percentage of workers who "work from home." Data from the Census Bureau's latest American Community Survey shows that during the years leading up to the pandemic, that rate was hovering around five percent. In 2021, it was over 18 percent, and it remains to be seen if this upward trend will continue or will level off in what is most certainly (close to) the "new normal."



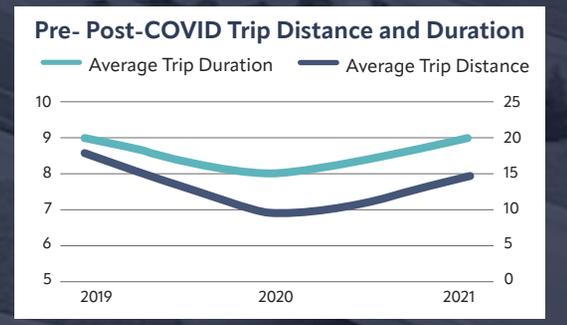
### Taxi/Ride Hailing

The Pandemic had a drastic impact on the use of Taxis/Ride Hailing within the AMPA. During the height of the Pandemic in 2020, the percentage of trips using this mode of travel more than tripled to 0.5% of all trips. However, by 2022 this percentage had decreased, but remained higher than pre-pandemic levels.



### Trip Distance and Duration

Trip distance and trip duration were also affected by the pandemic. Both experienced a significant reduction in 2021, dropping 20 percent and 23 percent respectively. However, by 2022, the average trip duration exceeded pre-pandemic levels, although average trip distance staying below pre-pandemic levels.



# Bicycle & Pedestrian Traffic

## Trends on the Region’s Multiuse Trails in 2022

MRCOG’s seven permanent bicycle and pedestrian counters located on multiuse trails around the City of Albuquerque give us perspective on bicycle and pedestrian travel in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. With these counters we can monitor trail use 24/7 and look for seasonal trends, peak times of travel, make comparisons to previous years, and more. Below are some examples of things we can look at with the data we collect.

### TOTAL TRAIL USE AND MOST POPULAR TRAILS

In 2022, just over 872,000 bicycle and pedestrian trips were counted on Albuquerque’s multiuse trails at seven counting sites. The Bosque Trail continues to be the most popular trail. However, counters on other trails also recorded considerable use.

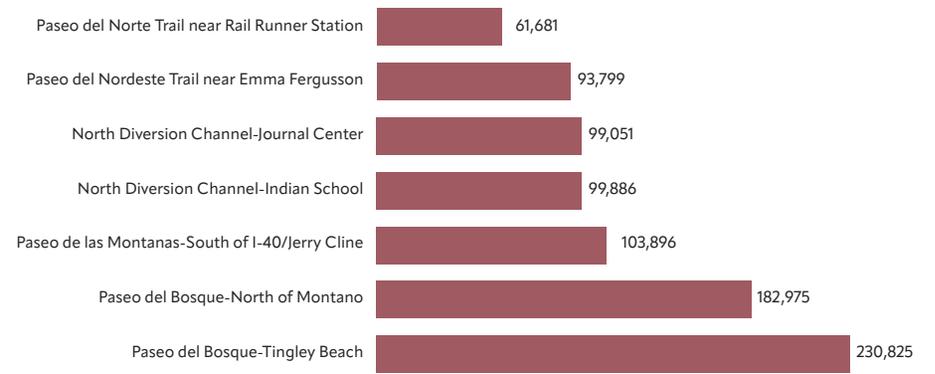
### MOST POPULAR TIMES FOR A RIDE OR WALK ON THE TRAILS

October and August saw the highest number of trail users, followed by September and July.

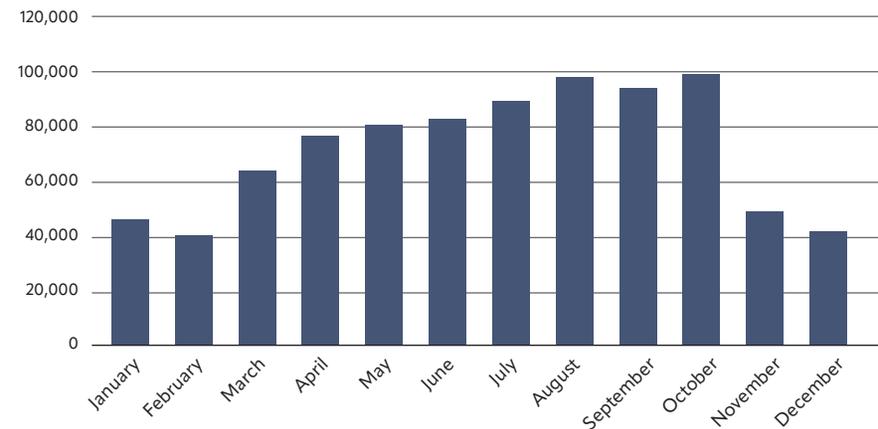
Comparing weekend to weekday numbers can provide insight into whether trails are used predominantly for commuting or leisure purposes. Trails with higher percentages of weekend use are likely especially popular for leisure purposes, whereas trails with lower percentages of weekend use might be used more for commute trips.

The hourly profile of bicyclists on two different trails also supports this assumption. On the Paseo del Nordeste Trail counter—a trail that has a lower percentage of weekend bicyclists and which might have more commute trips compared to other trails—two distinct peaks can be discerned at 8am and at 5pm. On the other hand, the Bosque Trail has a higher percentage of weekend bicycle trips and therefore possibly more leisure trips. The hourly weekday profile for that location shows one peak at around 10am.

Albuquerque Total Trail Use, 2022



Albuquerque Trail Use by Month, 2022



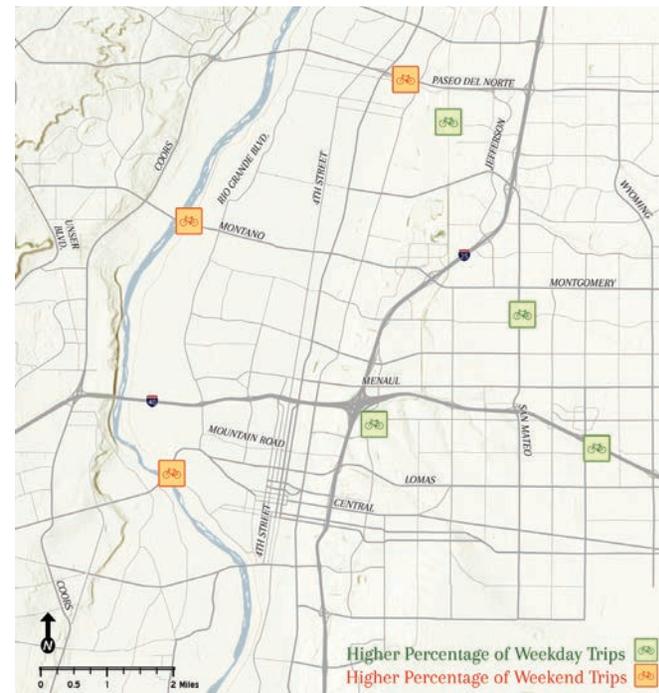
### ANNUAL TRAIL USAGE TRENDS

So, how did 2022 compare to the previous year? There were nearly 88,000 more trips recorded on the trails in 2022 compared to 2021, an 11 percent increase. While this is not as high as the trail use witnessed during the height of the pandemic and closures in 2020, it is a positive indicator for non-motorized travel in our metro area.

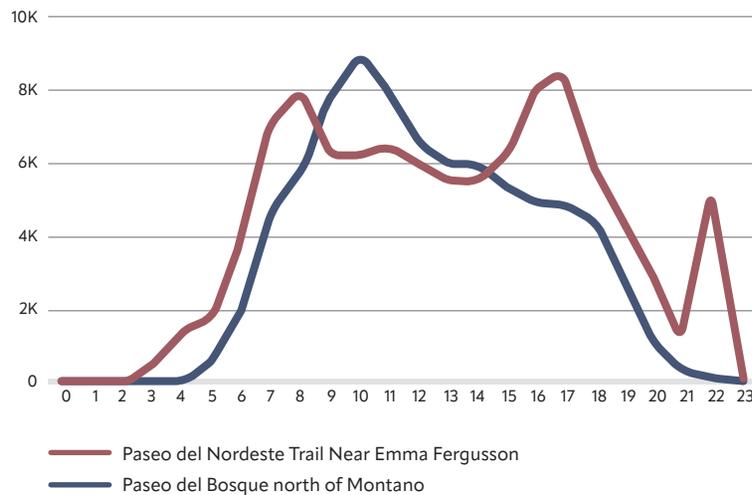
Bike and pedestrian counts are important to understanding where people are biking and walking and therefore help us in prioritizing transportation investments and planning for safety. MRCOG is currently working with a consultant and a stakeholder committee comprised of member agency staff on a study that is taking an in-depth look at the existing conditions and data needs for counting bicycles and pedestrians in the metro area. The study will include recommendations on how to build on MRCOG’s current bicycle and pedestrian counts program to provide planners and decision-makers better data and a better understanding of the numbers and locations of non-motorized trips being taken region-wide. The study will conclude by the end of 2023, and MRCOG plans to start implementing recommendations from the study as soon as possible once they are finalized.



Locations of Trail Counters



Average Weekday Hourly Trail Use by Bicyclists, 2022





# Transportation Improvement Program

## MRMPO Finalizes Development of FY24-29 TIP

This past year, the MRMPO finalized the development of the FFY 2024-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area. The TIP programs federal funding for transportation projects for a six-year period. Each fiscal year of the TIP is required to be fiscally constrained: the amount of funds programmed each year must not exceed the amount of funds estimated to be available in that same year. The FFY 2024-2029 TIP contains an estimated \$961,906,997 of funds for transportation investment and improvements.

Projects included in this TIP development include vital roadway and bridge improvements, intelligent transportation system enhancements, bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs, transit expansions and enhancements, and much needed safety improvements and studies. Projects proposed for inclusion into the TIP must be consistent with the area’s current, long-range transportation plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and proposed projects are evaluated to see whether they meet the MTP’s key regional goals.

### TIP DEVELOPMENT

The TIP development process was initiated in the late summer of 2022 with the final adoption of the MRMPO Project Selection Process (PSP) and the update to the MRMPO TIP Policies and procedures. The PSP was a key tool used to evaluate project proposals on how well they helped achieve key regional goals of the MTP. The call for projects was initiated in September of 2022 with a December 31st deadline for submittals. MRMPO hosted nine TIP development workshops throughout the metro area and were well attended by member agencies. Staff

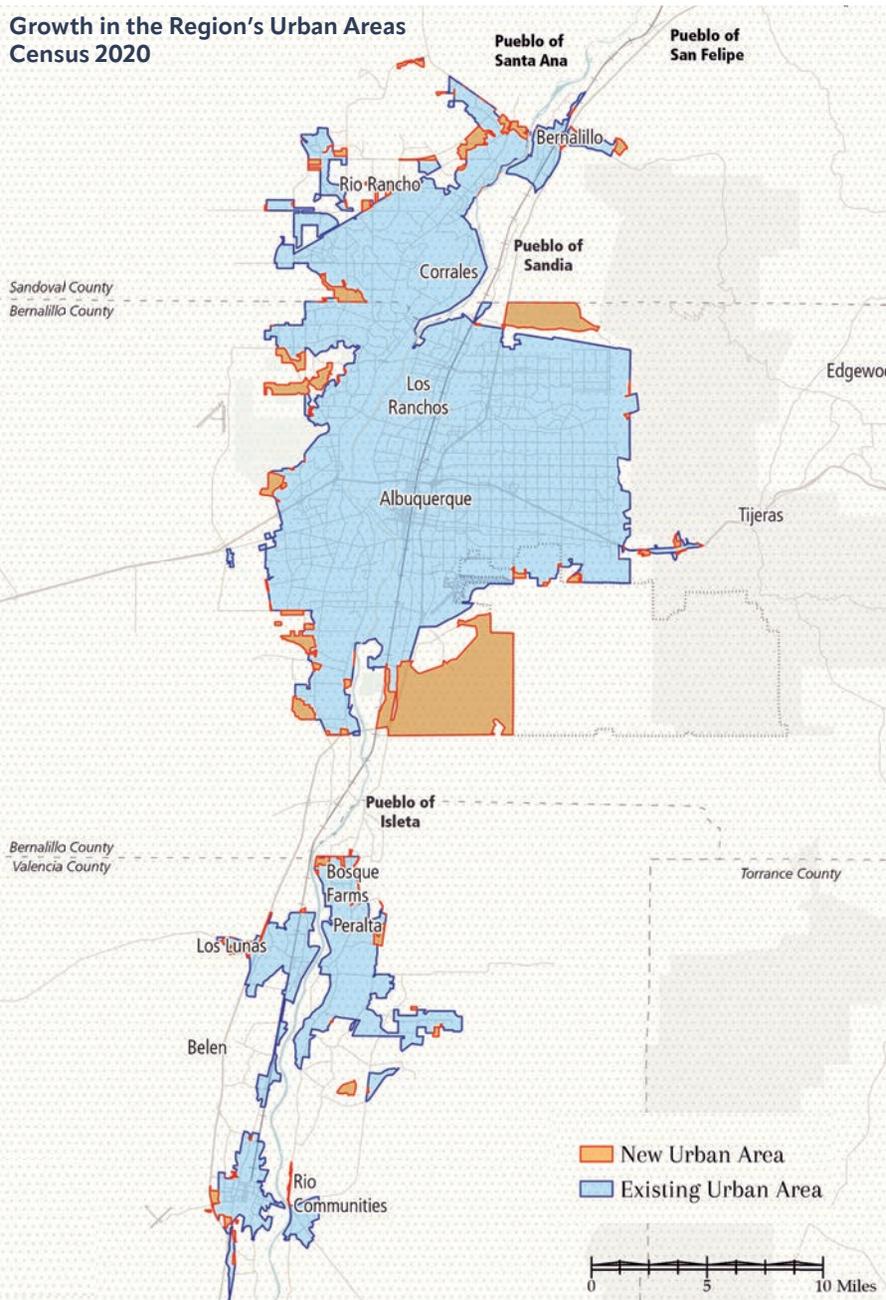
reviewed and ranked projects in early 2023 and hosted weekly TIP development meetings with the Transportation Program Technical Group (TPTG) during February and March of 2023. In April and May of 2023, the MPO staff and the TPTG developed draft recommendations and scenarios to come up with the final FFY 2024-2029 TIP for adoption in July of 2023.

The overall development of the new TIP was fairly streamlined and a successful process. MRMPO and member agencies were aware of funding and resource challenges as the TIP development was underway. The challenges before the group inspired all member agencies to cooperatively fund much needed transportation infrastructure improvements for the next six years. The process was successful once again due to the unprecedented coordination and cooperation as a region.

MPO staff would like to thank all our member agencies, committees, and the Metropolitan Transportation Board for their continued support of the transportation planning and programming process.

### TIP Development Timeline





### EXPANDED URBAN AREA

Every ten years, the US Census Bureau releases a map of 'Urban Areas' based on population and housing density and the 2020 Decennial Census counts. These boundaries are important for transportation planning.

Urban Areas with a population over 50,000 are required to have a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The Mid-Region MPO represents both the Albuquerque and the Los Lunas Urban Area. The Urban Area population dictates the amount of federal transportation funds that flow through an MPO to its member agencies for transportation improvements.

The map illustrates the Census Urban Areas within the MPO boundary as defined by the 2010 Census (in blue), and the areas that were added based on the 2020 Census (in orange).

Over this past year, MRMPO has worked with its member agencies and NMDOT,

- 1) to create an adjusted Urban Area boundary that encompasses the entire Urban Area and any additional transportation network to represent a complete and integrated urban transportation system.
- 2) to confirm that the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary includes areas that are reasonably expected to develop within a 20-year horizon.

In the fall of 2025, MRMPO will work with member agencies and NMDOT to update the functional classification of roadways within the adjusted MPO boundary.

# Updated Public Participation Procedures

## for the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO)

On March 17, 2023, the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) unanimously passed the updated Public Participation Procedures (PPP) document. The updated document contains text updates, new tools and methods, and new processes for evaluating the effectiveness of MRMPO's outreach.

### REVISED TEXT

The text of the document was revised to reflect new best practices within the field of outreach and engagement, as well as those specifically related to transportation planning. For instance, a Virtual Public Engagement (VPI) section was developed. VPI includes any form of engagement that uses technology to allow participants to attend an outreach event—like a meeting—in a virtual way. Online tools such as Zoom and online surveys are good examples. VPI has become an essential part of MRMPO's outreach strategies.

A greater focus is now placed on equity in transportation planning and decision making. In addition to a more robust inclusion of equitable practices in outreach and transportation planning, the PPP has been overhauled at the same time as our Title VI document, which address Civil Rights and non-

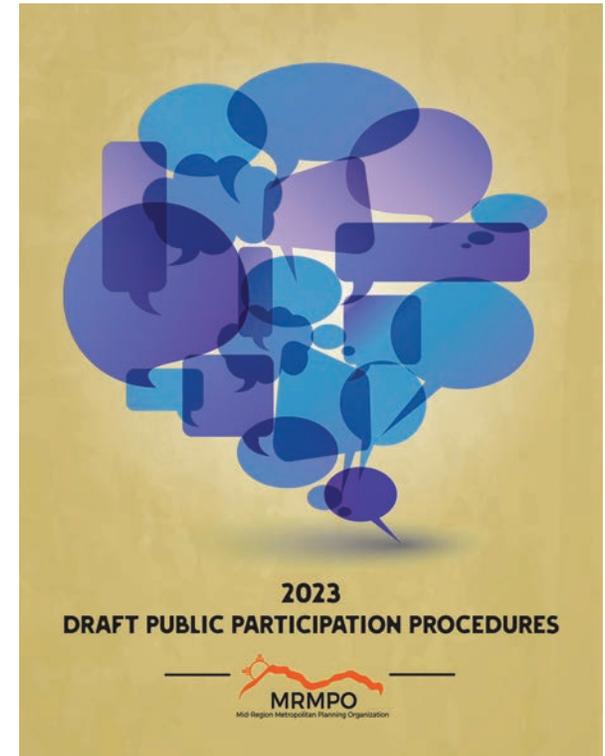
discrimination. The PPP is required to be included in the appendix of MRMPO's Title VI document to ensure that these two documents function as a unit.

### TOOLS

The PPP also received an infusion of new tools to help guide staff during their outreach efforts. 'The Spectrum of Community Engagement Tool' is an outreach tool that has been adopted from the International Association of Public Participation and modified to fit MRMPO's needs. It helps inform and guide the approaches that different levels or phases of engagement may require. For instance, an outreach effort may simply need to inform the public or agency about a project. If feedback from the public is required, a different set of engagement tools will be used.

### EVALUATION

The final element of the PPP update is the inclusion of new evaluation tools. There are multiple tools that have been developed to help MRMPO's outreach efforts meet essential goals that all outreach campaigns and efforts should prioritize, to design unique outreach plans for specific community needs, and to evaluate the overall effectiveness of MRMPO's outreach.



A GREATER FOCUS IS  
NOW PLACED ON **EQUITY**  
**IN TRANSPORTATION**  
**PLANNING AND DECISION**  
MAKING.

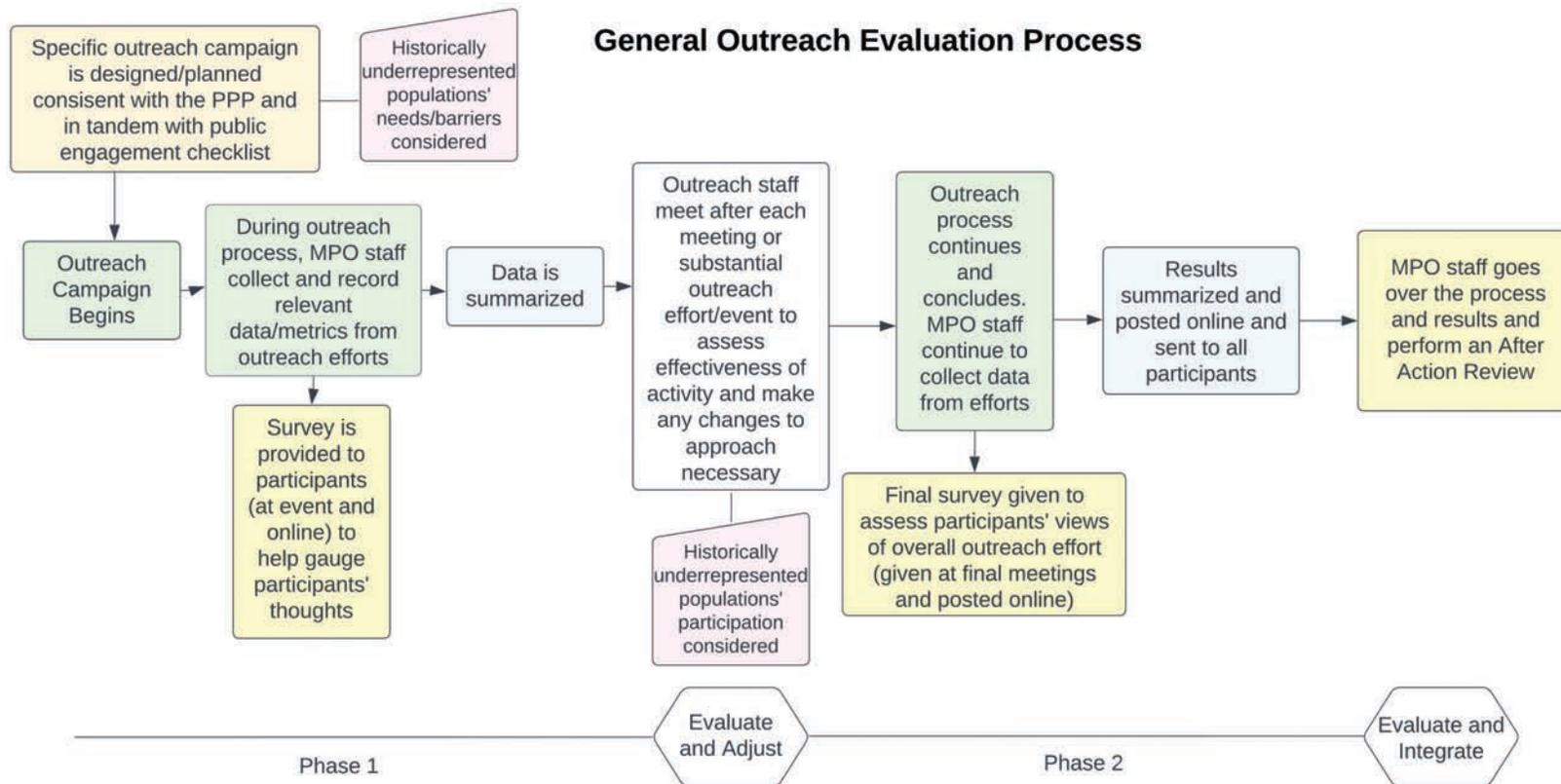
In addition to the tools developed by staff for the PPP update, MRMPO also acquired new outreach software. After thorough research, staff decided to use MetroQuest, a transportation planning specific software that can take MRMPO's outreach capabilities to the next level.

MetroQuest allows transportation planners to develop attractive online surveys to get people to

engage in the planning process virtually. The surveys feature lots of images and interactive maps and are designed to take only five minutes to complete. This optimizes participation and completion rates. In fact, MetroQuest surveys see over 65 percent of visitors turn into participants. We are excited about MRMPO's future engagement efforts.



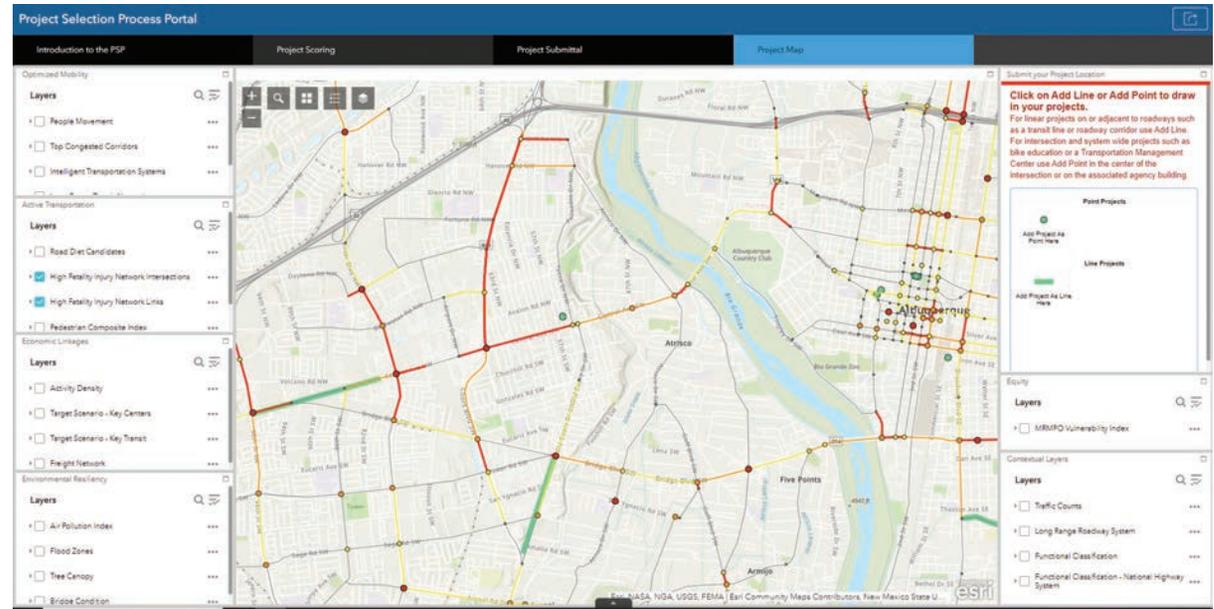
### General Outreach Evaluation Process



# Project Selection Process

## For Federal Transportation Funding

Member agencies request federal transportation dollars through MRMPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for all types of transportation projects, from bridge repairs to connecting roadways to extending the region's bike trails. Unfortunately, the number of these requests is far greater than the amount of money available. This is why MRMPO has developed a way to prioritize funding. This quantitative process allows us to sift through dozens of project submittals and rank them based on how the project will benefit the region. This Project Selection Process (PSP) elevates transportation projects that best meet the regional goals set forth in MRMPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). It is refined every four years during the development of a new TIP.



## PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Is the project designed to relieve congestion on our most congested corridors?
- Does the project address a known gap in the transportation network?
- Does the project improve a bridge in need of repair?
- Is the project located on the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) network?
- Is the project designed to increase safety on the High Fatality and Injury Network (HFIN)?
- Does the project improve transportation access for households living in poverty and communities of color?

These questions serve as the basis for our update to MRMPO's project selection process, which was used to develop the most recent TIP. Additional improvements were to simplify the request form, streamline the application process, and to introduce a new online mapping tool.

The PSP Project Map allows agencies to simply draw in the project for which they are requesting federal dollars. Once a project is drawn on the map, MRMPO staff review its compliance with national and regional priorities. The map shows proposed projects (in lime green) alongside of our regional networks, such as the High Fatality and Injury Network (HFIN), a map that depicts the most dangerous locations in the region for traffic crashes.

The updated Project Selection Process helps MRMPO develop staff recommendations and aides technical staff from member agencies as they formulate the project list that will ultimately receive funding. This year, most of the high-ranking projects received federal money through the TIP.



## MRMPO WINS SAFETY GRANT

MRMPO is honored to be a recipient of a *Safe Streets and Roads for All* grant from the USDOT. The funds will be used to update MRMPO's Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan, in collaboration with our member agencies.

The updated plan will:

- 1) include best practices updated with the latest national guidance
- 2) increase community engagement focusing on traditionally underserved communities
- 3) add an equity assessment
- 4) add tools for local governments to select and evaluate safety countermeasures

A conforming Regional Safety Action Plan will help facilitate future SS4A implementation grant submittals from MRMPO member agencies.

The Albuquerque metropolitan area is the second most dangerous for pedestrians in the entire nation. Underlying data reveal vast inequities regarding who is dying. Albuquerque's International District, an area of concentrated poverty and persons of color, holds only six percent of the population but is the location of 26 percent of all pedestrian fatalities. The Action Plan will shine the light on this underserved area as a regional priority and ensure targeted outreach to its residents.

The plan will also focus on balancing the unique needs of urban and rural areas. It will offer urban entities a prioritized list of projects guided by the region's High Fatality and Injury Network. Rural areas will benefit from a toolbox of FHWA-approved safety countermeasures and a decision-making tool that will help agencies select the most appropriate treatments for a location. Ultimately, the Plan will serve as a safety roadmap for all member entities while lowering the bar of entry for smaller jurisdictions and Tribal governments.

MRMPO's Policy Board has strengthened its commitment to safety by convening a special Safety Working Group and passing a resolution affirming safety as a regional priority. The Action Plan will guide transportation investments in a targeted manner to prioritize projects and strategies that best serve the goal of reducing traffic fatalities in the region.





### ANNUAL TRIBAL SUMMIT

MRMPO hosted the second annual Tribal Summit on June 7, 2023. This summit was designed to serve as a platform for Tribal leaders, planners, technical staff, and transportation specialists to learn more about some of the services that the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG), including MRMPO and the Regional Planning Program (RPP), offers to all Tribal members.

The agenda for the summit was crafted to address the feedback from Tribal members at the previous summit, shed light on future opportunities for funding, and offer a deeper dive into technical services. In an effort to further collaboration and participation between MRMPO, the RPP, and Tribal members, this year's summit also included presentations from RPP staff to incorporate perspectives that focus on the entire region and not the metropolitan area alone.

The summit was offered in a hybrid format, in accordance with MRMPO's outreach and engagement best practices, so participants had the option to attend in person at the MRCOG offices, or virtually through Zoom.



### MRMPO TECHNICAL SERVICES CENTER

The MRMPO Technical Services Center is a portal that provides access to much of the data and analyses that go into long-range, regional transportation planning. Transportation planning tackles travel-related questions: where do people live and how do they travel for work, school, and other activities? Long range planning involves projecting how this will change in the future (our current planning horizon year is 2045) by using specialized analyses and modeling. All this requires and generates large amounts of data.

The Technical Services Center provides data at various geographic scales, from the community level to the region and includes information like how it fits into state and national goals. Included are socioeconomic forecasts, travel forecasts, maps, high resolution aerial imagery, environmental data, economic impact analyses, and more.

[mrcog-nm.gov/583/technical-services-center](https://mrcog-nm.gov/583/technical-services-center)





# Valencia County Transit Facility

## For Rio Metro Bus Service

The Valencia County Transit Facility (VCTF)—opening fall 2023—will be the new home of Rio Metro’s dial-a-ride and fixed route bus services in Valencia County. Located near the intersection of NM 6 and NM 47 in the Village of Los Lunas, the VCTF will feature a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified administration building as well as a secure parking area for buses.



In August 2022, Rio Metro’s design team, led by Bohannon-Huston, finalized the design of the VCTF, and Rio Metro issued a request for proposals for construction. An \$8.8 million contract was awarded to Weil Construction, who had recently completed the North Central RTDs new maintenance facility in Española.

At the time of publication, VCTF construction was well over halfway complete. After dirt was first turned at the groundbreaking ceremony in December 2022, construction has progressed rapidly. In the spring of 2023, carpenters framed, sheathed, and roofed the building; and electricians, plumbers, and HVAC technicians had roughed in their wiring, piping and duct work within the walls and ceilings.

The VCTF is, in large part, Rio Metro’s response to significant growth in the Village of Los Lunas and Valencia County more broadly. Since 2010, Rio Metro has leased space from the Village at the Los Lunas Transportation Center and the Fleet Maintenance Yard for its staff and fleet. Rio Metro will return this leased space to the Village so that it can better serve its community. The VCTF, in turn, will give Rio Metro plenty of room to expand its fleet and grow its services.

Construction of the VCTF would not be possible if not for a \$6 million Bus and Bus Facilities grant from FTA. The New Mexico Department of Transportation also supported the project by leasing the property free-of-cost to Rio Metro, as well as contributing \$1 million for construction.

# Zero-Emissions Transition Plan

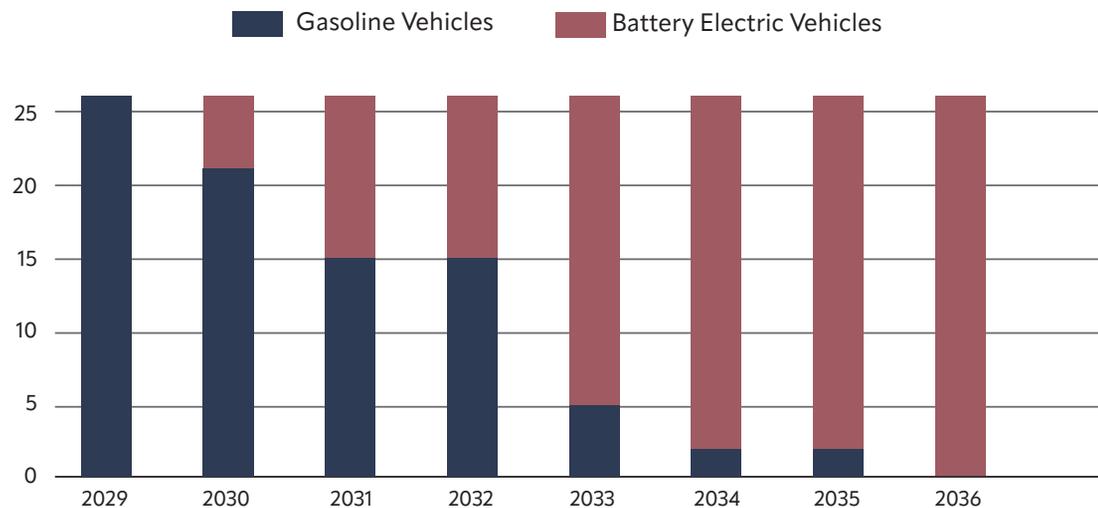
## For Rio Metro Bus Service

With the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in 2021, the federal government and FTA are encouraging transit agencies to transition to zero-emission vehicles: future grant awards from FTA will favor zero-emission technologies, and only agencies with a formal Zero-Emissions Technologies Plan (ZETP) in place will be able to compete for that funding. To that end, Rio Metro completed a ZETP that maps out the transition of its bus and service vehicle fleets to zero-emission technology by 2040.

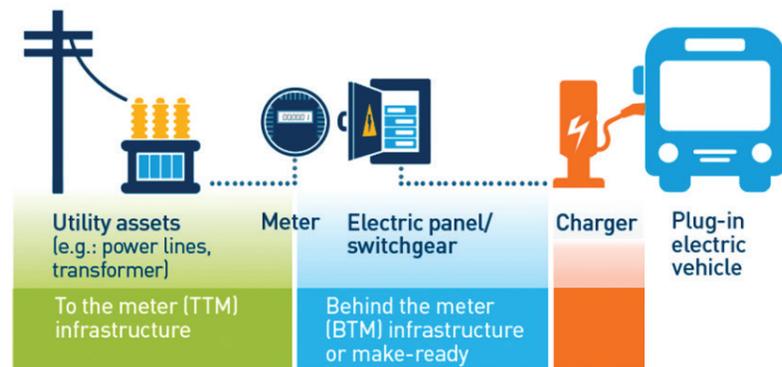
Of course, Rio Metro’s transition to zero emissions will occur within the framework of available technologies. Battery-electric versions of the 25-foot cutaway buses that Rio Metro uses are just now beginning to enter the market. Unfortunately, they lack the range to provide a full day’s service on many of Rio Metro’s routes without midday charging. While hydrogen technology could potentially alleviate this “range anxiety”, there are no comparable hydrogen fuel cell vehicles on the market; there are few hydrogen suppliers, and hydrogen costs are still extremely high.

Moving forward, Rio Metro will continue to monitor all technological developments in this area.

ZETP Fleet Composition by Fuel Type, Valencia County Transit Facility



Bus Charging Infrastructure Diagram



Source: American Public transportation Association, *Preparing to Plus in Your Bus Fleet*, 2019



### **TOWN OF BERNALILLO NEW MULTI-PURPOSE PATH ALONG TRACKS**

The Town of Bernalillo, with Rio Metro and the NM Department of Transportation, completed construction of a multipurpose trail along the Rail Runner tracks in the Town of Bernalillo. The new trail extends south from the Downtown Bernalillo station to Lucero Avenue and North to the US550 station for a total length of 1.5 miles.

The initial impetus for the project was to improve safety. The completed project significantly improves walking and bicycling conditions along the rail corridor as well. The new pedestrian crossing near W.D Carroll Elementary School, and sidewalk and roadway improvements at Lucero Avenue and Avenida Bernalillo improve both motorized and non-motorized travel in the area.

### **RAIL RUNNER OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE FACILITY**

While the customer facing aspects of operations are in excellent condition, the Rail Runner's thirty-one vehicle fleet is maintained in a far below standard facility. The existing facility includes an open, undersized canopy above a single track and inspection pit, a parts warehouse in such poor condition it is beyond rehabilitation, and 1960s-era office space. Because vehicle inspections and maintenance occur outdoors, blowing sand, dust, snow, etc., complicate otherwise straightforward procedures and increase risk to employees and equipment.

Rio Metro has completed a facility planning effort to develop the needed operations and maintenance facilities. Critical, near-term improvements that address the most urgent needs include a maintenance shop with required tracks and turnouts, work areas for maintenance staff, and a fuel and lubricants station. When complete, the improved facility will provide a range of short and long-term benefits for Rio Metro – increased efficiency in daily operations and maintenance, greatly improved working conditions for the hard-working staff at the facility, the ability to accommodate service expansion, and investment into a Historically Disadvantaged Community and an Area of Persistent Poverty.

While design work is still underway, the cost estimate of the facility range from to \$26 to \$51 million dollars. But, thanks to Senator Heinrich's support for Rio Metro's funding request other successful requests, Rio Metro has assembled a significant portion of the needed funds and the project is steadily moving forward.

# Santa Fe National Cemetery Visitation

## A Rio Metro Pilot Program

Over the last year, Rio Metro developed and implemented a pilot program to provide seniors with a unique opportunity to visit their loved ones interred at the Santa Fe National Cemetery. The initiative stemmed from a citizen attending a Rio Metro presentation who was concerned about the lack of convenient and affordable transportation options for individuals residing in Albuquerque to access the cemetery.

The pilot program consisted of three trips from Albuquerque area Senior Centers to the National Cemetery and back using the New Mexico Rail Runner Express as the primary mode of transportation. The trips took place on April 19, May 17, and June 14, 2023, and were limited to 50 people per trip.

Rio Metro's Marketing Specialist, Marie Morra, collaborated with Rail Runner's Operations, the City of Albuquerque's Department of Senior Affairs, the City of Santa Fe's Senior Services Division, and the Santa Fe National Cemetery, and each entity was responsible for a different leg of the journey.

The City of Albuquerque handled registration through their senior centers, bussed participants to the Rail Runner station, and provided sack lunches. Rio Metro provided transportation on the Rail Runner from Albuquerque to Santa Fe, informational posters, and lanyards for participants.



The City of Santa Fe provided transportation from the Santa Fe Depot to the National Cemetery and back. The Santa Fe National Cemetery provided an informative presentation and shuttled individuals to the grave sites they wanted to visit. There was no cost to any of the seniors participating in this program.

"I had not been able to visit my spouse's resting place for 2 1/2 years because as I get older I'm not able to navigate the fast-paced interstate highway anymore," said one participant, whose husband was interred at the National Cemetery in 2016. "I am most grateful and thank everyone who made it possible for me to visit my loved one."

Rio Metro is planning to continue this collaboration, with the goal of coordinating three more trips in the Spring and Summer of 2024.



### RIO METRO MARKETING

Beginning mid-year 2022, the marketing department engaged in a plethora of projects which continues to date. The dedicated staff played pivotal roles in helping to increase seniors riding the train on Wednesdays, creating award winning print pieces and campaigns, and conducting ridership surveys, among other things. New partnerships and sponsorships were developed which helped increase brand awareness for Rio Metro. Sports partnerships continue to provide a lot of exposure to a broader audience, and this year New Mexico United was added to our lineup with Albuquerque Isotopes and New Mexico Bowl.

A new series called "Women in Transportation" shone a light on women in key positions for both Rio Metro and MRCOG who told their story and what it means to be in this industry.

Recognition of the creativity and quality of the work produced in the marketing department once again became evident by the number of awards won on the international, national, and local levels. Included in the fourteen awards so far this year, is the one voted on by the people named appropriately The People's Telly Award for the "Seniors 60+ Ride Free on Wednesdays" video. The video also won the Grand Award in the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) 2023 AdWheel Awards for Best Marketing and Communications to Support Ridership or Sales.



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# New Mexico Rail Runner Express Safety

## Mock Emergency Drill to Prepare First Responders for Real Emergencies

When it comes to knowing how to respond to a real emergency on the Rail Runner, the best training is to stage a mock emergency on the train. Back in December of 2022, Rio Metro, along with Herzog Transit Services, Inc., and Albuquerque Fire Rescue did just that. The three agencies conducted a mock emergency training in an effort to better prepare agencies, crews, and responders in the event of real train emergency. This type of training is extremely valuable to all those involved, as it creates a scenario in which responders actually react to a situation as if it were happening in real time.



In this particular instance, the surprise emergency event took place in Downtown Albuquerque just south of the Amtrak Station just before 10 o'clock in the morning. It centered around a situation in which a fire had happened on the train. The 15-20 participating first responders from seven different agencies encountered nearly 20 volunteer-victims, or "PNA's" (People Needing Assistance) each with their own storyline—be it an open wound, burn, inhalation injury, etc.—to deal with as if it was the real thing. After the drill, everyone involved gathered for a de-briefing to discuss how the exercise ultimately went, and what could be improved upon in future trainings, as well as in real-life emergencies.

Rio Metro holds these emergency drills biannually to provide better familiarization on key factors and priorities that develop at the forefront of any crucial situation. The hands-on experience that is derived from this agency partnership and first responders is crucial to railway emergency preparedness.

"These kinds of trainings help make us better as a team," said Robert Gonzales, Director of Rio Metro Transit District. "In a true emergency, time is critical, and communication is key. So, it's important that we have the knowledge and familiarization of working together."

Seven agencies participated in this mock emergency: Rio Metro Regional Transit District, Herzog Transit Services, Inc., Amtrak, Federal Railroad Administration, NM Department of Transportation, Transportation Security Administration, and Albuquerque Fire Rescue.



### SENIOR GROUP TRIPS ON THE RAIL RUNNER

In the Fall of 2022, Rio Metro began working with local organizations that serve seniors—including senior centers, veterans' groups, and women's auxiliary groups - to coordinate group trips between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Each trip provides transportation from the Montañito Rail Runner Station to the Santa Fe Depot and back.

Once in Santa Fe, participants have the option to eat lunch at Tomasita's Restaurant at the Santa Fe Railyard, which is pre-ordered and ready when the group arrives. Following lunch, they return on the train. A Rio Metro staff member travels with the groups, engaging them along the way with games and trivia. All trips take place on Wednesdays when seniors 60 and older ride free.

There have been 3-4 coordinated trips per month since October 2022, totaling approximately 250 participants. The only cost to seniors participating in the experience is lunch. For many, these trips are their first experience on the Rail Runner. They provide participants with a unique travel training opportunity and help them feel comfortable using the train on their own in the future.

## MID-REGION REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM

# Village of San Ysidro Comprehensive Plan Update

### Mid-Region Regional Planning Program Assists with Plan Update

The Mid-Region Regional Planning Program (RPP) has been assisting the Village of San Ysidro with an update to their comprehensive plan since June, 2022. This work has been funded through a Community Development Block (CDBG) Grant that the RPP helped the Village of San Ysidro apply for back in 2019.



Comprehensive plans are vision documents, formed with substantial input from local residents, that guide development over the next 20 years. They are used by policy makers to inform land use decisions and ensure that they align with the community's vision and goals. Comprehensive plans also help communities be more competitive when they are applying for funding. The comprehensive plan provides a document that communities can reference to show that a project is a priority of the residents and that the project works towards meeting the community's long-term goals.

Comprehensive Plans often start by describing the existing conditions of a community. They use socioeconomic data to describe the current status of the community. When working in such a small community, like San Ysidro, it can be difficult to find accurate data. Census data for small communities often has very large margins of error, so we must use creative ways to get more accurate data. For example, in 2020, differential privacy treatments were added in the Census methodology which created notable inaccuracies for small municipalities.

The RPP worked with the MRCOG Socioeconomic staff to create a population estimate that better aligned with the Village perception of recent population change. According to the Census, San Ysidro's 2020 population totaled 166 persons—a decrease in population of about 14 percent. Community members did not feel that they had seen such a drastic decrease in the population. MRCOG staff used housing-unit and shift-share analyses to create a population estimate for San Ysidro of 196. Residents felt that this number represented a much more accurate population count.



*Village of San Ysidro flood prevention efforts. The RPP participated in emergency meetings to help the Village of Jemez Springs, upstream, identify funding sources to repair infrastructure damage caused by the flooding.*

The analysis demonstrated that the Village had seen a very slight increase of one percent in population versus a decrease of 14 percent.

After creating a socioeconomic profile for the community, the RPP and the steering committee for this project started monthly meetings. The Village of San Ysidro Trustees opted to function as the steering committee for this update to their comprehensive plan.

The RPP has also sought community input through a community survey and multiple community events. The RPP set up a table at the San Ysidro Feed Store on two different Saturdays to talk to residents about

what they feel are their community's strengths and where they see opportunity for improvement.

The RPP were able to talk with over 20 San Ysidro residents, and used this input to develop goals and strategies for the Village to present to the Village Trustees. The Trustees will help to prioritize the goals and strategies after which they will be incorporated into the final plan.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Village of San Ysidro to create a plan that will meet the community's needs and will serve as a guide to create a sustainable and resilient community.

## **DFA CAPACITY GRANT AWARDED**

In December of 2022, MRCOG was awarded a Capacity Grant in the amount of \$100,000 from the NM Department of Finance Administration (DFA). This funding was designed to provide grant writing assistance to communities who would otherwise miss out on grant funding due to lack of capacity or expertise. With the Capacity Grant funding the MRCOG has assisted many communities in the Mid-Region with grant writing and technical assistance.

Two communities successfully submitted applications for the Connect NM Pilot Program, with a total ask of approximately \$11.22 million. These communities would have either not applied for this funding or would have been less competitive without the assistance of a professionally trained grant writer. These projects will have a significant impact on the access to broadband in two traditionally underserved communities in the Mid-Region.

We have also worked with several communities to prepare grant applications for wastewater treatment plant repairs, community facility upgrades, and park improvements. Thanks to the dexterity and guidance of a grant writer, one of the communities is conducting an income survey to illustrate to USDA that they are eligible for grant funding rather than a loan.

In the next month we will be helping communities in Valencia County with their applications for the recently released FY 2023 EDA Disaster Supplemental funding and working on an application for the Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs Funding Opportunity for WCCNM.



# Updated Regional Transportation Plan

## MRRTPPO Working on Implementation

The Mid-Region Regional Transportation Planning Organization (MRRTPPO) provides transportation planning and technical assistance to areas outside of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area (AMPA) boundary.

The RTPO utilizes a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that is updated every five years to guide its work. With the 2022 adoption of the RTP, the RTPO has been working on the implementation of this guiding document.

The following are some highlights.

**Goal 1: Operate with Transparency and Accountability** —The Title VI Plan was adopted by the RTPO in April of 2023. This plan ensures that we are operating in a way that is equitable and inclusive to all our community members.

**Goal 2: Improve Safety and Public Health for All System Users**—The RTPO is partnering with the MRMPO to work on an update to the Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan (RTSAP). RTPO staff will work to include the rural communities in this important plan.

**Goal 3: Preserve and Maintain our Transportation Assets for the Long Term**—RTPO staff will be updating and improving our processes for the development of the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIPR) to develop a more complete list of projects in the Mid-Region.

**Goal 4: Provide Multimodal Access and Connectivity for Community Prosperity**—RTPO staff continue to promote opportunities to fund multi-modal infrastructure for our communities including Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

**Goal 5: Respect New Mexico's Cultures, Environment, History, and Quality of Life**—RTPO staff has been working with the NM Tourism Department to promote the Salt Missions Trail and Scenic Byway, and other projects related to tourism.



## WATER BOARD EMBRACES "ONE WATER" APPROACH

The Mid-Region Water Resources Board (WRB) has been working on a new approach to planning for water known as "One Water." The One Water approach considers the water cycle as a single integrated system in which all water flows are recognized as potential resources, acknowledging the interconnectedness of surface water, groundwater, brackish water, stormwater and wastewater.

One Water is a collaborative planning and implementation process for managing finite water resources for long-term resilience and reliability, and addressing municipal, agricultural and ecosystem needs in an inclusive, and sustainable manner to secure a bright, prosperous future. In essence, the One Water philosophy asks us to move forward from the perception of "my" water and "their" water to the perception of "our" water.

Because the WRB has representation from various agencies involved in water resource management and water services, we believe that we can work together to build bridges between agency "silos" and take a comprehensive systems-oriented approach to develop solutions that work best for all of us. Simply creating a dialogue between the water providers, flood control, wastewater, in coordination with planners and policy makers could help identify gaps and inefficiencies in how we plan for water, and gain efficiencies by coordinating efforts.

The One Water framework has already been adopted by such entities as the US Water Alliance, the Water Environment Federation, the National Association of Conservation Districts, Denver Water and Tucson Water.

## MRCOG Board of Directors

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MRCOG's board of directors consists of forty-eight elected and appointed officials from the local, municipal and special units of governments within State Planning and Development District Three: Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, Valencia Counties and the Town of Edgewood. The Board of Directors, works to address issues from a regional perspective.

### **Bernalillo County**

Commissioner Barbara Baca  
County Manager Julie Morgas Baca  
Commissioner Steven Michael Quezada

### **Sandoval County**

Commissioner Katherine Bruch  
Commissioner David Heil

### **Torrance County**

Commissioner Leroy Candelaria  
County Manager Janice Barela

### **Valencia County**

Commissioner Jhonathan Aragon  
Commissioner Gerard Saiz

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COO Lawrence Rael  
Councilor Isaac Benton  
Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn  
Councilor Klarissa Peña  
Councilor Pat Davis  
Councilor Dan Lewis  
Councilor Brook Bassan

### **City of Belen**

Mayor Robert Noblin

### **City of Moriarty**

Mayor Ted Hart  
Councilor M. Steven Anaya

### **City of Rio Rancho**

Mayor Gregory D. Hull  
Councilor Robert Tyler

### **City of Rio Communities**

Peggy Gutjhar

### **Town of Bernalillo**

Mayor Jack Torres

### **Town of Edgewood**

Commissioner Jerry Powers

### **Town of Mountainair**

Jesse Davidson

### **Town of Peralta**

Leon Otero

### **Village of Bosque Farms**

Mayor Russell Walkup

### **Village of Corrales**

Mayor Jim Fahey  
Councilor Zachary Burkett

### **Village of Cuba**

Mayor Richard R. Velarde  
Clerk/Trustee Vandora Casados

### **Village of Los Lunas**

Mayor Charles Griego  
Erin Callahan

### **Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque**

Mayor Donald Lopez

### **Village of Tijeras**

Nicolas Kennedy  
Michael Limón

### **Village of Willard**

Mayor Robert Chavez  
Clerk Emily Sanchez

### **Albuquerque Public Schools**

Barbara Petersen

### **Los Lunas Public Schools**

Ron Williams

### **Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority**

Bruce Thomson

### **Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District**

Barbara Baca

### **Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority**

Cassandra D'Antonio

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## MRCOG Boards and Committees

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### **Metropolitan Transportation Board**

COO Lawrence Rael  
 Councilor Renee Grout  
 Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn  
 Councilor Pat Davis  
 Councilor Klarissa Peña  
 Councilor Isaac Benton  
 Councilor Louie Sanchez  
 Barbara Peterson  
 Commissioner Eric Olivas  
 Commissioner Barbara Baca  
 Commissioner Walt Benson  
 Commissioner David Heil  
 Melissa Jaramillo  
 Councilor Steven Holdman  
 Councilor Peggy Gutjahr  
 Mayor Gregory Hull  
 Councilor Robert Tyler  
 Councilor Paul Wymer  
 Mayor Jack Torres  
 Mayor Russell Walkup  
 Councilor Stuart Murray  
 Michael Jaramillo  
 Mayor Donald Lopez  
 Mayor Jake Bruton  
 Ron Brown  
 Ron Abramshe  
 Tony Sylvester  
 David Quintana  
 Justin Gibson  
 Merrill Yazzie  
 Juan Rey Abeita  
 Jon Paul Romero

### **WCCNM Board**

Marvis Aragon  
 Odes Armijo-Caster  
 Beth Barela  
 Joseph Bizzell  
 Doug Calderwood  
 Karla Causey  
 Danielle Casey  
 Eleanor Chavez  
 Robert Chavez  
 Vaadra Chavez  
 Troy Clark  
 Herb Crosby  
 Kristen Gamboa  
 Bobby Getts  
 Marni Goodrich  
 Bob Grassberger  
 Tracy Hartzler  
 Antoinette Holmes  
 Gregory Hull  
 Krista Kelley  
 Joe LiRosi  
 Roxanna Luna  
 John Mierzwa  
 Debbie Ortiz  
 Stacy Sacco  
 James Salas  
 Waldy Salazar  
 Leslie Sanchez  
 Diane Saya  
 Jerry Schalow  
 Jennifer Sinsabaugh  
 Raymond Trujillo  
 David Valdes  
 Michael Voegerl  
 Mark Zientek

### **Rio Metro RTD Board**

Mayor Donald Lopez  
 Councilor Isaac Benton  
 Councilor Dan Lewis  
 Councilor Pat Davis  
 Councilor Brook Bassan  
 Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn  
 Mayor Tim Keller  
 Steven Tomita  
 Mayor Jack S. Torres  
 Commissioner Adriann Baroba  
 Commissioner Walt Benson  
 Commissioner Steven Michael  
 Quezada  
 Mayor Russell Walkup  
 Councilor Mel Knight  
 Michael Jaramillo  
 Councilor Robert Tyler  
 Councilor Jim Owen  
 Councilor Dan Stoddard  
 Commissioner Michael Meek  
 Commissioner Joseph Bizzell

### **Rural Transportation Planning Organization Committee**

Mayor Denny Herrera  
 Jeanette Linville  
 Ken Brennan  
 Mayor Victor Gallegos  
 Michelle Jones  
 Sheri Bozic  
 Leonard Ludi  
 Steve M. Lucero  
 Mark Hatzenbuhler  
 Gary Brett Clavio, Sr.  
 Leonard Lujan  
 Mayor David Dean  
 Glenn Tortalita

### **Water Resources Board**

Mark Kelly  
 Elizabeth Newlin Taylor  
 Ken Ziegler  
 Dale Tafoya  
 Mayor Jack Torres  
 Eric C. Olivas  
 Councilor Stuart Murray  
 Sterling Donner  
 Ronnie Reynolds  
 Debbie Ortiz  
 Mayor Donald Lopez  
 Joaquin Baca  
 Jim Chaisson  
 Commissioner Katherine Bruch  
 Cassandra D'Antonio  
 Steve Glass  
 Lynn Montgomery  
 Brenda Smythe  
 Sal Reyes  
 Bobby Ortiz  
 Andrew Hautzinger  
 Bob Wessely

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# MRCOG Staff Listing

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**Yoshiro Akutagawa**

Facility Maintenance Manager, NMRX

**Peach Anderson-Tauzer**

Outreach/Engagement Planner

**Joe Aragon**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Kristy Aragon**

Career Development Specialist, WIOA

**Paul Aragon**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Severo Aragon**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Saul Araque**

Business Consultant, WIOA

**Maximina Baca**

Administrative Assistant, WIOA

**Michael Baca**

Sr. Systems Cyber Security Administrator

**Teanna Baca**

Business Consultant, WIOA

**Carmela Beck**

Special Projects Coordinator, WIOA

**Kelly Benavidez**

Planning Administrative Assistant

**Ryan Benavidez**

Transit Operator, Rio Ranchos

**Sandra-Mary Bernard-Wallace**

Transit Dispatcher, Rio Rancho

**Peter Blewett**

RMRTD Network/System Tech

**Tanya Blewett**

Sr. Train Dispatcher

**Bianca Borg**

Regional Planning Manager

**Eduardo Borunda**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**James Breiterman**

Train Dispatcher

**Grant Brodehl**

Special Projects Planner II

**Donald Brown**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Sheila ter Bruggen**

Communications Coordinator

**Andrew Bustos**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Gregory Cabrera**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Elizabeth Carter**

Operations Review & Policy Compliance Manager

**Dewey Cave**

Executive Director

**James Charley**

Maintenance Worker, NMRX

**Albert Chavez**

Transit Operations Supervisor, Rio Rancho

**Marcos Chavez**

Train Dispatcher

**Mark Chavez**

Train Dispatcher

**Martin Chavez**

Maintenance Worker, NMRX

**Tabatha Chavez**

Career Development Specialist, WIOA

**Allyne Clarke**

Marketing Manager

**Tara Cok**

Sr. Transportation Planner

**Christopher Contreras**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Jesse Contreras**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Ross Cummings**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Mary Margaret Dunham**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Anthony Duran**

Information Systems Specialist

**Danny Duran**

Facilities Maintenance Manager

**Ezekiel Espalin**

Transit Supervisor, Valeneia

**John Felix**

Transportation Planner

**Ernie Fernandez**

Train Dispatcher

**Keegan Fisher**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Stephanie Flynn**

Career Development Specialist, WIOA

**Richard Frye**

Maintenance Worker, NMRX

**Vangie Gabaldon**

Special Projects Coordinator

**Hannah Gadri**

Career Development Specialist, WIOA

**Angela Galindo**

Transit Dispatcher, Los Lunas

**Andrew Gallegos**

Accounting Manager

**John Gallegos**

Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Kenneth Garcia**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Michelle Garcia**

Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Samuel Garcia**

Traffic Counter

**Cristina Garduno**

Business Consultant, WIOA

**Benjamin Garland**

Transportation Planning Intern

**Ted Gaudette**

Information Systems Officer

**Patricia Georges**

Program Manager, WIOA

**Nicole Giddings**

Program Support Coordinator, WIOA

**Bianca Gonzales**

Career Development Specialist, WIOA

**Clyde Gonzales**

Facilities Maintenance

**Robert Gonzales**

Operations Manager, NMRX

**David Grega**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

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**Carmen Gutierrez**  
Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Eric Gutierrez**  
Human Resources Manager

**Michelle Harrison**  
Program Support Coordinator, Los Lunas

**Sherri Hastings**  
Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Bonnie Hawthorn**  
Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Jessica Hilfers**  
Transportation Planning Intern

**Kristan Hodgson**  
Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Ruben Holcomb**  
Trasit Manager-Bus

**Larry Horan**  
Attorney

**Michael Jiron**  
Graphic Designer/Project Manager

**James Kolberg**  
Transportation Planner

**Denise Kurtz**  
Transit Operators Supervisor, Los Lunas

**Marcus Lente**  
Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Elizabeth Lewis**  
Safety Officer

**Julian Lucero**  
Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Ariana Lueras**  
Carreer Development Specialist, WIOA

**Maggie Lujan**  
Program Analyst, WIOA

**David Maes**  
RMRTD Training Coordinator

**Lupe Maltos**  
Customer Service, NMRX

**Gerald Mares**  
Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Samantha Marquez**  
Business Consultant, WIOA

**Arthur Martinez**  
WIOA Administrator

**Jocelyn Martinez**  
Program Support Coordinator

**Riann Martinez**  
Marketing Specialist

**Nathan Masek**  
Senior Transportation Planner

**Nathaniel McKenzie**  
Business Consultant, WIOA

**Martha Mendoza**  
Administrative Assistant

**Claudia Patricia Merlo**  
Transportation Planner

**Augusta Meyers**  
Communications Manager/  
Economic Development Program  
Manager

**Adrienne Molinar**  
Accountant, WIOA

**Maria Mondragon-Perea**  
Customer Service, NMRX

**Kendra Montanari**  
Transportation Planning and Technical  
Services Manager

**Marla Montiel**  
Special Projects Coordinator

**Steven Montiel**  
Transportation Program Manager

**Aaron Moore**  
RTPO Regional Planner

**Marie Morra**  
Marketing Specialist

**Kendra Morrison**  
Career Development Specialist, WIOA

**Steve Moya**  
Traffic Counter

**Karen Mullins**  
Supervisor, Rio Rancho

**Eric Murphy**  
Customer Service, NMRX

**Dalton Murphy**  
Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Rex Musselman**  
Transit Service Worker, Rio Rancho

**Amy Myer**  
Senior Finance Manager, MRCOG

**Hernan Navarrete**  
Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Hunter Northrop**  
Customer Service, NMRX

**Lance Northrop**  
Train Dispatcher

**Elizabeth Olson**  
Project Manager

**Renee Padilla**  
Accountant

**Stephanie Paiz**  
Special Projects Coordinator, NMRX

**Bill Panas**  
Facilities Maintenance

**Nicole Perches**  
Accountant

**Yvonne Perez**  
Transit Dispatcher, Los Lunas

**Phillip Pino**  
Procurement Officer

**Lisa Portillo**  
Accountant

**Gary Raighn**  
Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Ricardo Ramirez**  
Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Tracee Ramirez**  
Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Forest Replogle**  
Transportation Planner

**Renee Marie Robles**  
Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Sonora Raye Rodriguez**  
Program Manager, WIOA

**Tawnya Rowland**  
Lead Program Manager, WIOA

**Irma Ruiz**  
Customer Service Manager

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## MRCOG Staff Listing, continued

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**Steve Saavedra**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**JoAnn Saenz**

Transit Dispatcher Los Lunas

**Alexander Sanchez**

Train Dispatcher NMRX

**Daniel Sanchez**

Operations Manager, WIOA

**Richard Sanchez**

Maintenance Worker, NMRX

**Robert Sanchez**

Maintenance Worker, NMRX

**Twila Sanchez**

Quality Assurance Specialist, WIOA

**Lisa Sedillo**

Customer Service, NMRX

**Sagert Sheets**

GIS Manager

**Payton Showalter**

Regional Planner

**William Simon**

Transportation Planner

**Joel Steinhauer**

Transit Operator, Rio Rancho

**Christopher Sterling**

Advertising Sales Specialist

**Matthew Stone**

Transit Manager-Rail

**Tony Sylvester**

Planning Manager/Board Liaison

**Vera Taylor**

Transit Services Surveyor

**Barbara Thomas**

Office Manager

**Winifred Tinney**

Transit Operators Supervisor, Los Lunas

**Jesse Turley**

WIOA Accounting Manager

**Aymara Vasquez-Reyes**

Program Manager, WIOA

**Amber Vigil**

Accountant

**Conni Vigil**

Director of Finance and Administration,  
RMRTD

**Josephine Vigil**

Senior Finance Manager, RMRTD

**Raina Vigil**

Customer Service, NMRX

**Alan Wooten**

Transit Operator, Los Lunas

**Matthew Wylie**

Dispatch Operations Supervisor





**Mid-Region Council of Governments**

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