
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

UNM/CNM/Sunport Transit Study

Prepared for:



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Council of Governments**
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1.0 Introduction

This document summarizes the activities and process used to involve stakeholders and the general public in the alternatives analysis prepared for a proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) route serving the UNM/CNM/Sunport corridor in south-central Albuquerque. The study is a collaborative effort involving the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG), Rio Metro Regional Transit District (RMRTD), City of Albuquerque, University of New Mexico (UNM), and Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) main campus. MRCOG is the lead agency for the study phase. For the purposes of this paper, the reference to UNM includes the UNM main campus, the University of New Mexico Hospital and Health Sciences complex, UNM Science and Technology Park, and the UNM Athletics Complex.



A primary objective of the alternatives analysis is the identification of strategies and investments to improve north-south mobility to and between the major activity centers within the study area. While emphasis is on transit access and mobility, bicycle and pedestrian needs are also a consideration. Parking strategies and travel demand management strategies will also be identified as they relate to better transit mobility. In addition, land use strategies will be identified as they relate to the policy actions considered by FTA as part of Small Start projects.

Collaboration with public, agency, and institutional stakeholders is essential to achieving the study objectives. The success of the UNM/CNM/Sunport Transit Study depends largely on participation and input from agency and institutional stakeholders, the faculty, staff and student populace at UNM, UNMH, and CNM, the neighborhoods within the study area, and the general public.

The methods used to engage and involve these stakeholders have been integral to the overall study. Initial stakeholder outreach activities have focused on building stakeholder awareness of the project and its objectives, and identifying stakeholder interests and concerns. The information has helped shape project goals and objectives, the project need, and helped refine subsequent outreach strategies.

This document serves to describe the general approach and activities used to identify project stakeholders, the methods used to communicate with participants, and the objectives and outcomes of public engagement. Detailed summaries of the public outreach efforts conducted for each quarter of the project are also available.

2.0 Stakeholders

Initial stakeholder outreach included institutional and governmental jurisdictions, neighborhoods, businesses, and land owners, and the users of the existing parking and transportation system serving the project area. The Project Team, as well as Technical Advisors to the project, provided the initial list of stakeholders and user groups that would be interested in the study. The specific stakeholders identified include:

- Mid-Region Council of Governments
- Rio Metro Regional Transit District



- City of Albuquerque Planning, Transit, Municipal Development, and Aviation Departments
- City of Albuquerque Council Services
- Bernalillo County Public Works Department
- University of New Mexico
- University of New Mexico Hospital/Health Sciences
- UNM Science & Technology Park
- UNM Athletics Department
- Central New Mexico Community College Main Campus
- Neighborhoods adjacent to UNM, CNM, and the Sunport
- Individual businesses located within the study area (with emphasis on those in proximity to UNM, CNM, and the Sunport and the alignment of potential routes)
- Users and potential users of ABQ Ride destined to the project area
- Users and potential users of the UNM and CNM parking system and the UNM transit services
- Patients and visitors and the UNM Hospital and supporting medical complexes

Additional stakeholders identified by participants were included in subsequent communications as the study progressed.

3.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder input was received throughout all major phases of the study including: (1) identification of major issues and needs to be addressed with transit, parking, and land use; (2) development of project goals and objectives; (3) identification of alternatives and the metrics used to screen and evaluate alternatives; (4) the alternatives screening process and selection of a preferred alternative.

Technical and non-technical participants were involved using various methods. Institutional and governmental stakeholders participated via their involvement in a technical advisory committee, various workshops, and a Task Force. Involvement of the general public occurred via several series of public meetings and various tools to disseminate information and solicit input. Brief information specific to each of these groups and activities is provided below.

3.1 Technical Advisory Committee and Task Force

Technical Advisory Committee members include representatives of the institutional and governmental entities who have a vested interest in or are affected by the proposed project. Membership on these committees included representatives from the MRCOG, Rio Metro RTD, City of Albuquerque Planning, Aviation, Transit, and Municipal Development Departments, UNM, UNM Hospital and Health Sciences, CNM, and Lobo Development — the land development arm of UNM that manages development on university-owned lands that are not needed as part





of the institutional mission. The roles and responsibilities of the TAC are to help shape and guide the project objectives and technical approach; to identify existing plans and policies and coordination needs with other on-going projects; and to review analyses, findings, and recommendations.

The TAC implemented at the onset and met at major milestones (approximately once per quarter) to review and discuss study findings and advise the project team on data needs and analyses. This committee has met four times since the fall of 2012.

A Task Force comprised of high-ranking officials representing UNM, CNM, Albuquerque City Council, and Bernalillo County was used to provide policy-level guidance. At each phase of the study, the Task Force was provided updated information and asked to provide direction on project recommendations. The Task Force has convened a total of three times throughout the study phase at key decision points. This group is integral to the strategic implementation of transit and land use initiatives.

3.2 Land Use Workshops

A component of the UNM/CNM/Sunport Transit Study is the development of a land use strategy to identify existing land use plans and policies within the study corridor, to develop opportunities and a strategy to coordinate development plans and approaches between institutions and the City, and to recommend policy changes needed to integrate development with the proposed transit service.



Two land use workshops were held during the study phase. The first workshop took place in the summer of 2013 and included representatives from the Project Team, Technical Advisory Committee, and several developers with an interest in the study area. The objective of this half-day workshop was to evaluate existing land use and to consider the economic development potential of proposed route alignments. It was designed to actively engage key stakeholders in the corridor to identify areas of interest and opportunity. The groups identified potential station locations, subareas of distinct character and development, future housing development opportunities, streetscape enhancements, parking structure locations, and overarching project considerations such as BRT branding, mixed-uses, beautification, and the need for strong political/intergovernmental cooperation and support.

The second workshop was held in late September 2013. It focused on a more in-depth review of land use and economic development potential criteria considered by FTA in their review of Small Starts project applications. It also served to identify the policy/strategic actions needed by local governments to help direct future development along the preferred BRT route to be more transit supportive and to improve bicycle and pedestrian use.

3.3 Other Briefings and Meetings

In addition to the work with the TAC, Task Force, and land use workshops, briefings about the project were provided to various groups. Briefings and coordination meetings were held with groups from the City of Albuquerque, UNM, UNMH, and CNM. These meetings served to advance topic-specific discussions with specific stakeholder groups. They also expanded outreach efforts to other groups having a potential interest in the project. The feedback obtained was used to help inform the project



needs, alternatives, parking and land use strategies, and the opportunities for interagency collaboration and support. Briefings and meetings included:

- UNM Planning & Campus Development
- UNM Parking and Transit Services
- UNM Hospital Administration
- UNM Hospitals Parking/Transportation
- UNM Athletics Department
- UNM Board of Regents
- CNM Administration and Parking Services
- Lobo Development Corporation
- MRCOG Public Involvement Committee
- MRCOG Board
- RMRTD Board
- ABQ Ride Transit Advisory Board
- City of Albuquerque Planning Department (South Yale SDP)
- City of Albuquerque, City Council
- City of Albuquerque, Environmental Planning Commission
- Associated Students of UNM
- CNM Faculty and Administration volunteer group
- Santa Clara Neighborhood
- Southeast Heights Neighborhood Association
- University Federation of Neighborhoods

3.4 Public Meetings

Public meetings were aimed at providing the public, especially specific stakeholder groups, with an update on the project and the opportunity to engage in all major phases of the study. Public meetings were held at each phase and generally focused on soliciting input on the project needs and objectives, the development of potential route alternatives and evaluation metrics, land use considerations, and the selection of the locally preferred alternative.

To date, a series of five public meetings have been held. Each series, with the exception of the kick-off meeting, included three meetings held at different locations and on different days and times. This approach was used to broaden the opportunities for the public to participate in meetings. Meetings were held on the UNM and CNM campuses, and at community centers located within the project area.

All public meetings were held as either open house sessions or with a presentation followed by a question and answer session and open house period. Feedback was obtained using flip charts, comment forms and, for presentation style meetings, interactive “clickers” that allowed participants to comment real-time in response to specific questions. Verbal comments were recorded during meetings and comment forms were provided to attendees to allow for written comments. Comment forms were also made available on-line along with project information and public meeting presentation materials. Phone and email contact information was provided for comments and questions.



Kick-Off Meeting

In June of 2012, the first kick-off evening meeting was held at Heights Community Center to introduce the study to the public and to solicit feedback regarding travel experiences in the study area to help inform the project's goals and objectives. Generally the feedback indicated the need for improved pedestrian and bike access and safety, transit improvements including more frequent stops and longer hours of operation, a reduction in commuter parking and traffic congestion particularly in the residential neighborhoods, and a general desire for a greater variety of land uses in the area including commercial and recreational open space. This input substantiated the project need, purpose and objectives.



Series 2

A second series of public meetings, held in October 2012, presented the project goals and objectives and was focused on soliciting feedback specifically related to the study area's assets and weaknesses, the community vision, and transportation issues. Breakout discussion groups identified key destinations and assets to include UNM Hospital, educational institutions, the sports facilities, the Sunport, and various other small businesses within the study area. Participants identified the need for a north-south transit



connection that maximizes ABQ Ride route connections and provides improved frequency of service, safety, and real-time bus schedule information. The community voiced a desire for an area with contiguous mixed-uses located along a safe, pedestrian and bike-friendly corridor. This input informed the project team of the study area's transportation needs and helped define the long-list of route alternatives as well as the metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of each in meeting the project goals and objectives.

Series 3

A third series of public meetings, held in January/February 2013, presented the features and characteristics of enhanced transit and the development of the long list of potential route alternatives as well as the metrics to be used in the evaluation of the alternatives during the next phase. The study team solicited feedback on the project goals and objectives, the performance metrics for evaluating the alternatives, and other transit-oriented issues in the study area to move toward identifying a specific transit route that best addresses the area's needs. The long list of alternatives included 4 routes generally located along University Blvd, Yale Blvd, Buena Vista Blvd, and Girard Blvd.

Public participants voiced the need to minimize car trips in the area, the need to incorporate remote park and ride lots and bicycle facilities, as well as the need for improved frequency of transit service and good connections to existing services. The Buena Vista route and Girard route received numerous negative responses from Santa Clara neighborhood residents who were concerned with the compatibility of an enhanced transit route and the residential character of the neighborhood. A follow-up meeting was scheduled with the residents of this area to address the Santa Clara neighborhood's



specific concerns. The Yale alternative option through the Duck Pond on the University main campus brought about similar concerns from University representatives as well as the general public. The feedback received in this series of public meetings was used to further refine the long list of route alternatives to a short list for screening.

Series 4

A fourth series of public meetings, held in April/May 2013, presented the short list of potential route alternatives that were vetted by the evaluation metrics established by the project team as well as land use considerations within the study area. The purpose of these meetings was to solicit public input on the short list of alternatives; specifically to determine which alternatives best met the travel needs as well as potential “transit-supportive” land use opportunities along these corridors.

Public feedback indicated that frequency of bus service with longer hours, as well as direct routes and connections were key factors in encouraging the use of transit. Integral to the proposed enhanced transit services is the relationship between transit and parking; park and ride areas must be conveniently located well-within walking distance of stations. The Yale Blvd and University Blvd routes were deemed to best serve travel needs in the area; however the option through the Duck Pond area once again raised concerns among some participants. The need for multi-modal access within the study area was strongly emphasized. In regard to land use, participants generally supported mixed-use development that included affordable housing as well as development that did not diminish the character of historic residential neighborhoods.

This input received at the fourth series of public meetings was used to select the final short-list of alternatives to be advanced for further evaluation. The outcomes included the removal of the Duck Pond option on the Yale Blvd alternative and the selection of the final short list route alternatives on University Blvd and Yale Blvd.

Series 5

A fifth series of public meetings, held in September 2013, presented the findings of the alternatives analysis, the recommended preferred alternative, and the next steps for the project. The project team focused on soliciting input on the recommended alternative and the proposed configuration and operation of BRT on the proposed corridor. Concerns raised during these meetings included the need to incorporate bike lanes in the recommended alternative either along University or a parallel north-south corridor, the interface between pedestrian/bike zones and BRT, and the location of park and ride lots.



Generally, participants agreed with the recommended alternative and the proposed BRT levels of service. Going forward, the project team will address multi-modal access, connections, and interface with BRT and will continue to develop the station and park and ride locations in the next phase of the project.



3.5 Other Outreach Efforts

User interviews were conducted at the UNM and CNM campuses in the fall of 2012. The interviews consisted of several questions focused on travel behavior, use of current transit and parking services, and desired improvements to the general area, and desired improvements to transportation and parking services. The user interviews involved a total of 120 individuals, the vast majority of which were students at UNM and CNM.

In the fall of 2012, the study team also facilitated focus group discussions with UNM on-campus students and CNM staff members to gain more in-depth insights into their specific transportation needs.

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, MRCOG participated in 'Welcome Back Days' on the UNM Main and North campuses and the CNM Main campus to provide new and returning students, faculty, and staff with information regarding the transit study and to solicit feedback on transit needs and the short list of alternatives, and to invite individuals to participate in upcoming meetings. An email sign-up sheet was provided for those interested in being added to the project contact list.

3.6 Information Dissemination

Several methods were used to disseminate information throughout the study. Initial efforts involved newsletters and flyers that were distributed via mail, email, and hand-delivery to those businesses and residents located within and adjacent to the study area. This information was used to increase awareness of the project and to inform and update participants of project activities.

Project information was also published on the MRCOG general website (<http://www.mrcog-nm.gov/special-studies/unm-cnm-study>). All materials used at public meetings (presentations, handouts, displays, meeting notices, etc.) were made available on the website as well as other information including background information on the study, the latest news, upcoming meetings, and how to get involved and provide feedback. An up-to-date Facebook page provides participants with news and updates as well as media coverage of the project and other shared comments.

Public meeting notification methods included newspaper advertisements (both local and education institution publications), postcard mailings, email and UNM/CNM list serves, on-line notifications on MRCOG, COA, Bernalillo County, UNM, and CNM websites as well as the project Facebook page, the City of Albuquerque Neighborhood Newsletter, press releases, flyers and Rail Runner TV monitor ads. Throughout the study, email communication has proven to be the most-effective method of public notification.

3.7 Future Public Involvement Activities

Public input will continue to be an important element of the UNM/CNM/Sunport project as it advances into project development. The methods and techniques used to disseminate information and solicit feedback will be refined to emphasize those that proved to be most effective during the study phase and will focus on issues relevant to each phase of the project. In the latest series of public meetings, public comment shifted from broader desires and questions to specific questions about how about the service would operate and how impacts to neighborhoods and businesses would be considered and mitigated. It is anticipated that the TAC and Task Force will continue to oversee and direct the project and its focus will shift to the details of how to coordinate the BRT service with the plans and policies specific to each stakeholder entity.