

New Mexico Transportation Plan

South Central Regional Transportation Plan





Acknowledgements

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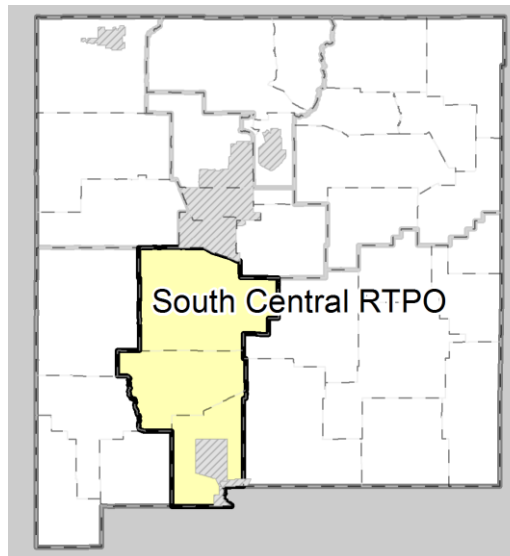
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agencies with a responsibility for region are also represented in an advisory, non-voting capacity on the SCRTPO Committee. The SCRTPO has the ultimate goals of increasing the efficiency of transportation systems within the region and assuring that the planning process is comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing.

What is a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)?

The development of a long range transportation plan provides an opportunity for elected officials, organizations, and individual citizens to determine how the transportation system should be structured to serve future needs most effectively. This Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is an integral part of the "New Mexico Transportation Plan" (NMTP), which is the New Mexico Department of Transportation's federally required long range transportation plan. The purpose of the RTP is to apply the statewide plan's Vision, Goals, Objectives and Strategies to the regional level. Under federal law, long range transportation plans must look ahead at least 20 years; however, New Mexico has chosen to go beyond the minimum to examine a 25-year timeframe instead. So, this RTP provides a framework for thinking about the region's transportation system over the period from 2016 to 2040.

About the South Central RTPO



The South Central RTPO (SCRTPO) encompasses approximately 14,700 square miles in Socorro, Sierra, and northern Doña Ana Counties. SCRTPO is a voluntary association of local governments and the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) that provides a forum for members to meet, plan, and work together on issues related to transportation in the South Central region. It is comprised of municipalities and counties and acts as the state-required Regional Planning Organization for the area. Its membership consists of elected officials and their designated alternates. Federal and state transportation planning and programs in the




Title VI

The South Central Council of Governments RTPO is committed to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 49 CFR, part 2, and all related regulations and directives. The South Central Council of Governments RTPO certifies that no person shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity under any service provided by the South Central Council of Governments RTPO. For more information or to obtain a Title VI Complaint Form, please contact Angela Rael at 575-744-5021 fax or email arael@sccog-nm.com or visit our website at for additional information.



Existing and Future Conditions



Several years ago, as Space Port America was developing in rural Sierra County, the South Central Region was anticipating that it would soon experience a period of phenomenal growth and an influx of technology and solar based industries. Today, however, the region's expectations and priorities seem to be shifting. The region now seems to be focusing more on its existing strengths, with a complimentary emphasis on dealing with problems of access to health care and other needed services that simply are not present within the region's communities. Accompanying the shift in thinking is a greater emphasis on finding ways to expand the range of transportation options available to the region's residents and visitors. Such options include safe highways, walkable Main Streets, bicycle facilities, and rural public transportation to connect people to places where health and other services are more available. There is also increased recognition of the importance of maintaining the cultural and environmental integrity of the region.

To plan for South Central New Mexico's long term transportation needs, we must develop strategies that will provide for quality growth, improved safety, and forward progress into the future. We need strategies that will accommodate growth within the region, while also maintaining and preserving our rural identity – i.e., the things that make the South Central region so appealing to those who reside within or visit the region.

Realizing that, in a period in which budgets are tight, NMDOT must focus its attention primarily on maintaining its existing assets rather than building new things, it will be especially helpful for us to engage community members to determine the directions that the "public wishes to go" given the limited funds that are anticipated to be available. We must be prepared to provide thoughtful input on whether, when, and how to undertake or implement any of a wide variety of projects or programs that may be proposed now or in the future. Examples include:

- Providing or expanding public transportation services (bus or rail)
- Expanding highway capacity
- Redesigning our "Main Streets" to enhance community character and walkability
- Reconstructing or adding new highway interchanges or intersections
- Adding passing lanes or acceleration/deceleration lanes
- Assisting communities with the development of airport services and infrastructure
- Providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and trails

Our South Central New Mexico citizens envision well-maintained roadways that provide safe travel. They want and expect a wider range of travel choices to become more available to everyone in a seamless system. They expect to travel on a system that will account for growth and will support the future expansions we can see on the horizon. And, they expect that the different elements of the transportation system will be developed and maintained in an environmentally sensitive way and be easily accessible to the aging population of our region.



Demographics

The South Central RTPO is home to approximately 1.8 percent of the state's entire population. As of the 2010 Census, the total population of the South Central Regional Transportation Planning Area was 36,589 (TABLE 1). Of the total, approximately 17,850 people lived in Socorro County, 12,000 people lived in Sierra County, and 6,700 people lived in Doña Ana County. The region's population has not been growing in recent years and it is anticipated to remain flat over the timeframe of this plan.



Table 1: Census 2010 Population of South Central Regional Transportation Planning Area

County	Census Classification	Census 2010 Population
Doña Ana	Rural Areas & Small Urban Clusters	6,735
	Large Urban Clusters + Small UZA	--
Sierra	Rural Areas & Small Urban Clusters	4,070
	Large Urban Clusters + Small UZA	7,918
Socorro	Rural Areas & Small Urban Clusters	8,875
	Large Urban Clusters + Small UZA	8,991
Total planning area population		36,589
Total statewide population		2,059,181
Planning area population as a percentage of the statewide total		1.8%

Source: 2010 United States Census.

Industries and Economy

Based on the “Southwestern Region Workforce Snapshot” prepared by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions Economic Research and Analysis Bureau for the seven county area that includes Doña Ana, Sierra, and Socorro Counties, healthcare and social assistance is the top industry in terms of employment. This is followed by educational services, retail trade, and accommodation and food services. The report found that certain industries are more concentrated in our counties than in the state as a whole. Even if they do not employ a large number of people, they are important to our economic base.

Table 2: Key Industries

Industry	More concentrated in this county than in the state as a whole
Utilities	Sierra County, Socorro County
Education	Doña Ana County, Socorro County
Construction	Sierra County
Healthcare	Sierra County
Agriculture	Doña Ana County, Sierra County, Socorro County

Currently, 40 percent of workers in the Southwestern Region are employed in four major occupational groups—office and administrative support; education, training, and library; food preparation and serving; and sales and related.

The report also found that employment in the health care and social assistance industry is projected to grow the most and fastest of all industries. Three quarters of the growth in the region is projected to occur in the top four major industries. While retail trade is included in the top four growth industries, it is not projected to grow the fastest. Transportation and Warehousing will grow faster than retail trade.

In addition, the report found that personal and home care aides and cashiers are projected to see the most average annual job openings (160 each) between 2010 and 2020. However, these are often lower wage jobs. The report found that the best job opportunities identified for the Southwestern Region and the Las Cruces MSA include elementary and middle school teachers; registered nurses; postsecondary education administrators; postsecondary teachers; and clinical, counseling, and school psychologists because these jobs are projected to grow in numbers and typically pay higher wages. Providing the citizens of the region with the ability to have access to attend classes, and their employment is imperative to the growth and success of any economy.





Key Challenges and Opportunities

As part of a continuing effort by the New Mexico Department of Transportation and the South Central Regional Transportation Organization, Regional Working Groups (comprised of a wide range of individuals from law enforcement to healthcare) were established in an effort to create a comprehensive, cohesive, effective, and diverse set of ideas in order to create a plan in which to identify the transportation challenges and needs of the South Central region.

The Regional Working Group meetings were held in various locations throughout the South Central region in an effort to facilitate an increase in attendance and input from members. In addition to the Regional Working Group meetings, a series of public outreach meetings were held throughout the region in an attempt to illicit public input which could be included in the creation of an effective and relevant plan. Information gathered at the Regional Working Group and public input meetings was compiled and shared with the South Central Regional Transportation Planning Organization's Policy and Technical Committee members, the South Central Council of Governments' Board of Directors, and the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

The key challenges identified throughout this process were as follows:

- **Changing Demand for Transportation:** (aging population and increased lack of mobility in which to access available transportation services, increased interests in the utilization of alternative modes of transportation, changing lifestyle preferences)
- **Sustainable Funding for Transportation Projects:** (due to the rural population and the socio economic status of residents, there is less tax base to assist in providing funding for much needed projects)
- **Declining Revenue:** (doing more with less)
- **Land Use Coordination:** (better access to public transit, shorter distance for bike/pedestrian, less time/money for auto users, benefits to multiple modes of transportation)
- **Existing Resource Use Coordination:** (restrictions on existing transport services that can only be utilized by a certain demographic... e.g., vans for senior citizens/disabled persons, transportation solely for medical purposes, etc.)
- **Connectivity Within the Region:** (a desire to attain a public transportation system for opportunities to utilize the resources throughout the region)



Identified Regional Needs

- **Active transportation** –With the increased interest in a healthier lifestyle and desire to decrease the amount of toxic emissions in the air by the use of automobiles, the desire for multimodal transportation is something that has been expressed as a growing need in the South Central region. More access to bike lanes & trails, walking paths, and other similar areas specifically accessible to alternative modes of transportation are important to have available. Connectivity to the tourist and recreational areas within the region, via alternative modes of transportation is essential in maintaining not only the youthful vitality of those who reside and travel within the region, it is essential to the economic vitality of the region as well.
- **Access to healthcare services** – In a mostly rural region with an aging population that is expected to increase, the desire for adequate access to healthcare is vital for the South Central region. With only two hospitals serving the entire South Central RTPO area, each located approximately 75 miles apart, many individuals seek specialized care in either Albuquerque or Las Cruces. This highlights the need for reliable, accessible, adequate, and affordable transportation to receive healthcare. .
- **Transit** - The Regional Working Group Members of the South Central RTPO identified the lack of active public transportation in rural areas as a significant need, one that if addressed, would increase employment rates, as well as benefit the economy. The population of the South Central Region consists of many retired and aging individuals who, although wish to remain active, want to forego driving, and have the ability and the option to access public transportation.



Transportation System Overview

System Overview

Key Routes

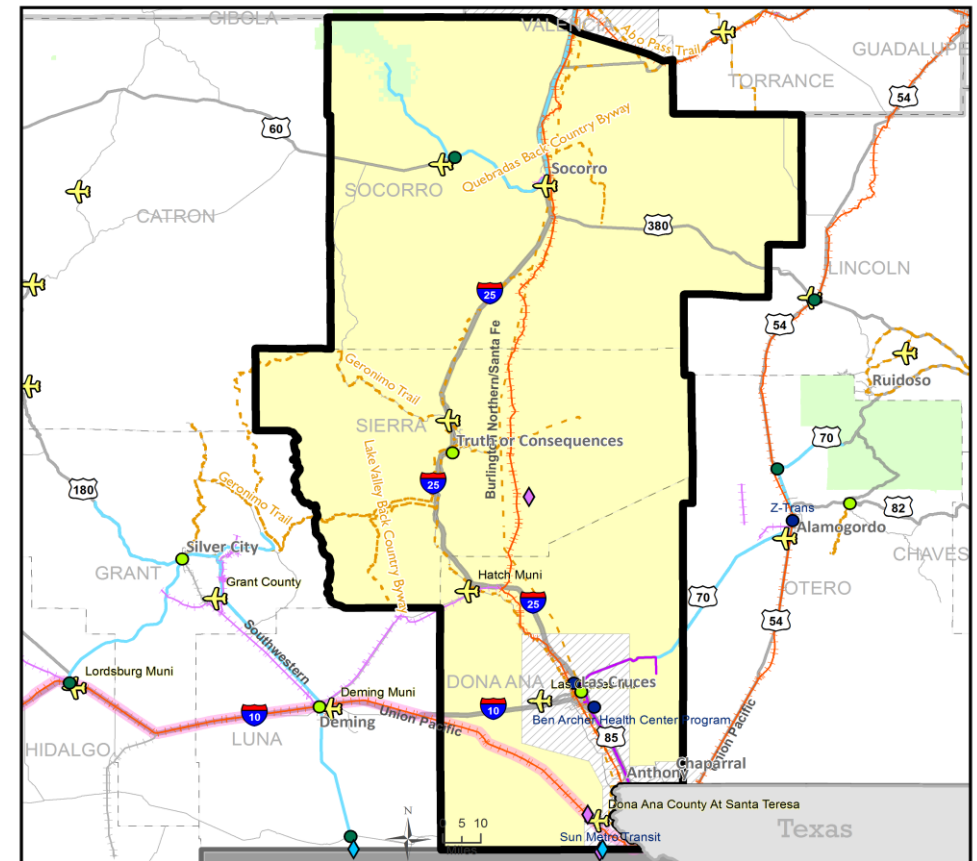
- Interstate 25
- Interstate 10
- US 380
- US 70
- US 60

Airports/Airstrips

- Las Cruces International

Rail Lines

- Burlington Northern Santa Fe
- Southwestern
- Union Pacific



NM MainStreet Communities

- Frontier Community Projects
- NM MainStreet Community
- State Authorized Arts and Cultural District

Intercity Transit Services

- Transit Services
- Border Crossings
- Industry Locations
- Corre Caminos
- Socorro Public Transportation
- NMDOT Park and Ride Services
- Greyhound

Rail

- Class 1 Railroad
- Class 3/Short Line Railroad
- Abandoned Railroad
- Amtrak Sunset Limited

Roads and Boundaries

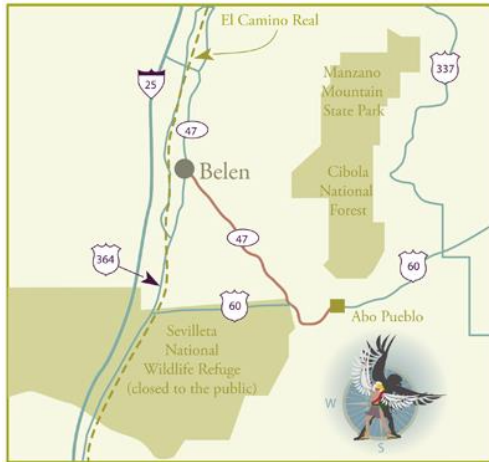
- New Mexico Scenic Byways & National Historic Trails
- Interstate
- US Road
- Tribal Lands
- Counties
- Other RTPO
- MPO
- South Central RTPO

Airport Categories

- ✈ Primary (Hub)
- ✈ Primary (Non Hub)
- ✈ Commercial Services
- ✈ Reliever
- ✈ General Aviation
- ✈ Non-NPIAS

Scenic and Historic Byways

Four roadways that pass through the RTP area have been designated as a Scenic or Historic Byway.



Abo Pass Trail Scenic Byway: Around 1540, small bands of Pueblo Indians trudged east through the Rio Grande Valley, carrying maize, piñon nuts, beans, squash, and cotton goods, to trade with their Plains Indian neighbors. In return, they expected to receive dried buffalo meat, hides, flints, shells, and salt. The route these traders took led past the Pueblo of Abo, strategically located near a cluster of springs on the trail to Abo Pass. This old footpath is now the Abo Pass Trail Scenic Byway. The byway links El Camino Real National Scenic Byway and the Salt Missions Trail Scenic Byway. It starts on the east side of Belen, where NM 47 angles off to the southeast towards its junction with US Highway 60. The byway follows US 60 east for twelve miles, to Abo Pueblo. With Gran Quivira and Quarai, Abo is now part of Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument. The Abo Pass Trail Scenic byway spans a distance of 31 miles.

Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway: From the creosote and cholla-swept sands of the Chiricahua Desert to the piñon and ponderosa cliffs of the Gila Wilderness, the wild freedom expressed by Chiricahua Apache warrior Geronimo more than a century ago embodies the scenic byway named in his honor. Born in a quirky desert town built over bubbling underground hot springs, the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway taps the largest reservoir in New Mexico before kinking its way to the nation's first declared wilderness. En route are rugged carved canyons, thickly wooded mountain passes, quaint villages and ghost towns that still number a few live souls in their ledgers. This historic trail spans a distance of 154 miles.



1. Chloride Ghost Town
2. Winston Historical District
3. Geronimo Springs Museum
4. Hillboro Historical District
5. Emory Pass Vista

Scenic and Historic Byways











Lake Valley Back Country Byway: California is known for its Gold Rush, but New Mexico also had its mining fever. Lake Valley Back Country Byway delves deep into the heart of the mineral-rich Black Range Mountains. As N.M. 152 winds west into the Black Range, the terrain gets hillier. Hillsboro, a village of 165 people, is nestled in the foothills along Percha Creek. A drive through its shady, tree-lined streets reveals many buildings from the late 1800s. The 1892 Union Church stands next door to the George and Ninette Miller House, built in 1894. The ruins of a jail and courthouse are relics of the period from 1884 to 1939 when Hillsboro was the Sierra County Seat. The byway turns south on N.M. 27, headed for Lake Valley. The byway continues east to Nutt, paralleling a spur line of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, built in 1884 to transport supplies in to Lake Valley and ore out. In 1934, the tracks were removed but the grade is still visible. The remains of a loading ramp can be seen at Nutt, where the byway ends. The ramp leads to nothing now, but those tracks once carried a prodigious load of wealth and people whose lives intersected on what is now the Lake Valley Back Country Byway which spans a distance of 44 miles.



Quebradas Back Country Byway: This 24-mile unpaved road slices through the arroyos, or breaks, that give the area its Spanish name and offers both vast and intimate views of New Mexico's geologic past. Wedged between two national wildlife refuges – Sevilleta and Bosque del Apache – and the state-run Ladd S. Gordon Waterfowl Complex, the Quebradas area also offers fleeting glimpses of desert wildlife, especially at dawn and dusk.

Roadway System by Tier

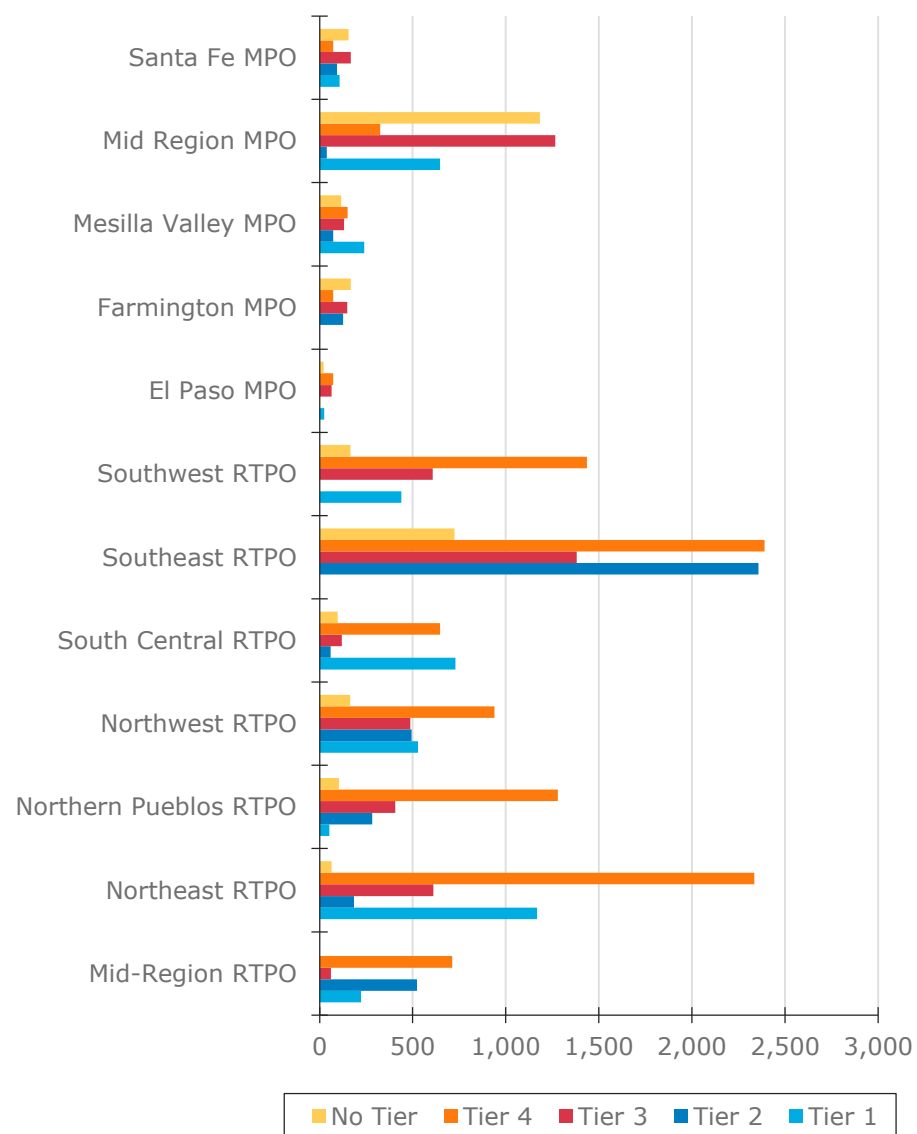
Working in coordination with its partners, NMDOT will use a tiered, multimodal prioritization system to establish performance targets and make resource allocation decisions. The table below defines three to four tiers for each mode that reflect the different levels of importance of different types of transportation facilities and services for moving people and goods. Standards for maintenance and operations reflect the tier structure, with higher tiers having higher condition standards than lower tiers. Tiers shaded in 'gold' will have the highest condition targets. Tiers in 'silver' will have lower performance targets, but still require substantial levels of investment. Tiers in 'bronze' will have the lowest performance targets. Tiers in white are for facilities that are not appropriate for investment. Given the higher performance targets, NMDOT will also make the higher tier facilities and services the primary focus of its capital investment. In the case of transit, NMDOT will prioritize investments on the basis of the *New Mexico State Management Plan for the Administration of Federal Transit Grants*.

Tier	 Roads	 Freight	 Bus/Rail	 Pedestrian	 Bicycle	 Aviation
1	Interstates	Interstates Transcontinental Railroads	Demand for >35 scheduled trips per week in each direction	Urban highway routes ... with population concentrations	High demand on- system routes	Primary commercial airports (e.g., Sunport)
2	Cities 20k+ Demand > 10k High tourist demand destinations	Remainder of priority truck network High demand shortline railroads	Demand for 20-34 scheduled trips per week in each direction	... with pedestrian generating land use	Medium demand on- system routes	Non primary commercial airports
3	Cities 10k+ Demand > 5k Rest of NHS Tourist destinations	Remainder of active short line railroads, regionally significant freight network	Demand for 5-19 scheduled trips per week in each direction	... all other segments	Low demand on- system routes	Reliever airports
4	All others	Abandoned railroads	Demand for 1-4 trips per week in each direction	Non-urban highways, no ped accommodation	Routes that appropriately prohibit bicycles	General aviation airports
	 "Gold Standard" Highest performance targets	 "Silver Standard" Mid-level performance targets	 "Bronze Standard" Lowest performance targets	 Not appropriate for investment		

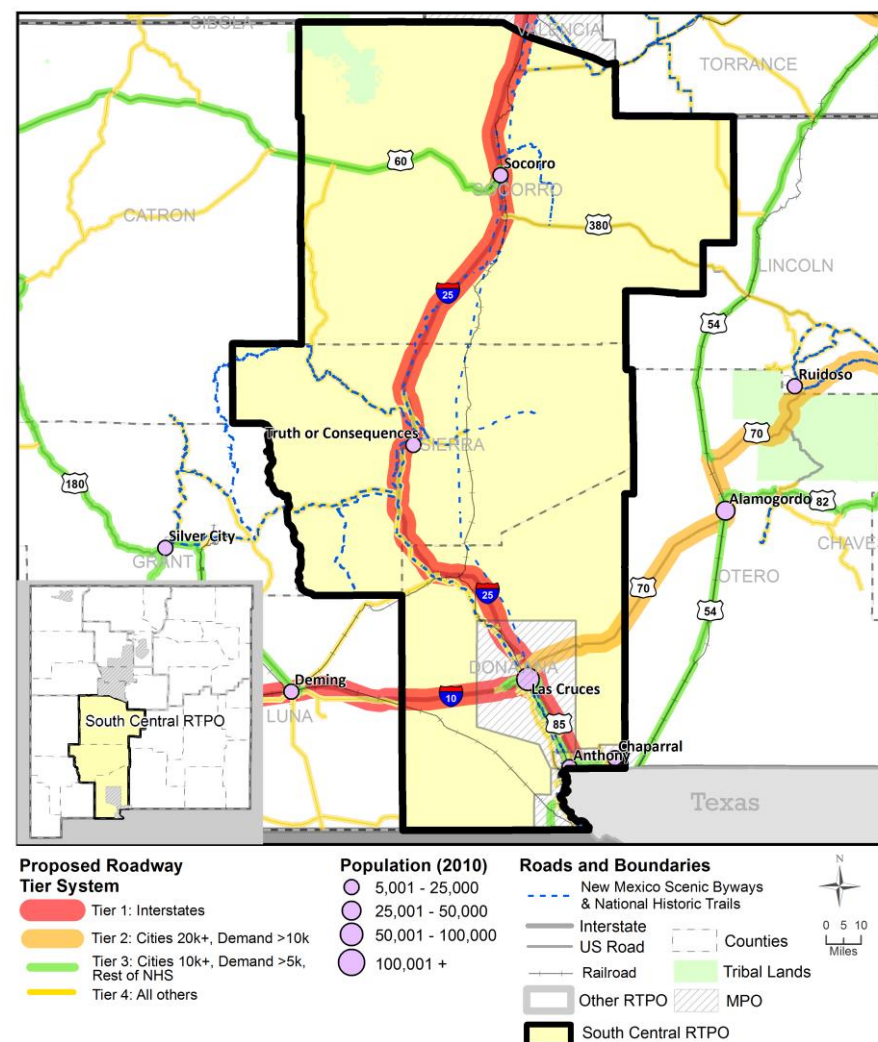
*Note: Bus/Rail, Pedestrian, and Bicycle tiers are preliminary and will be updated.



Total Lane Miles by Tier



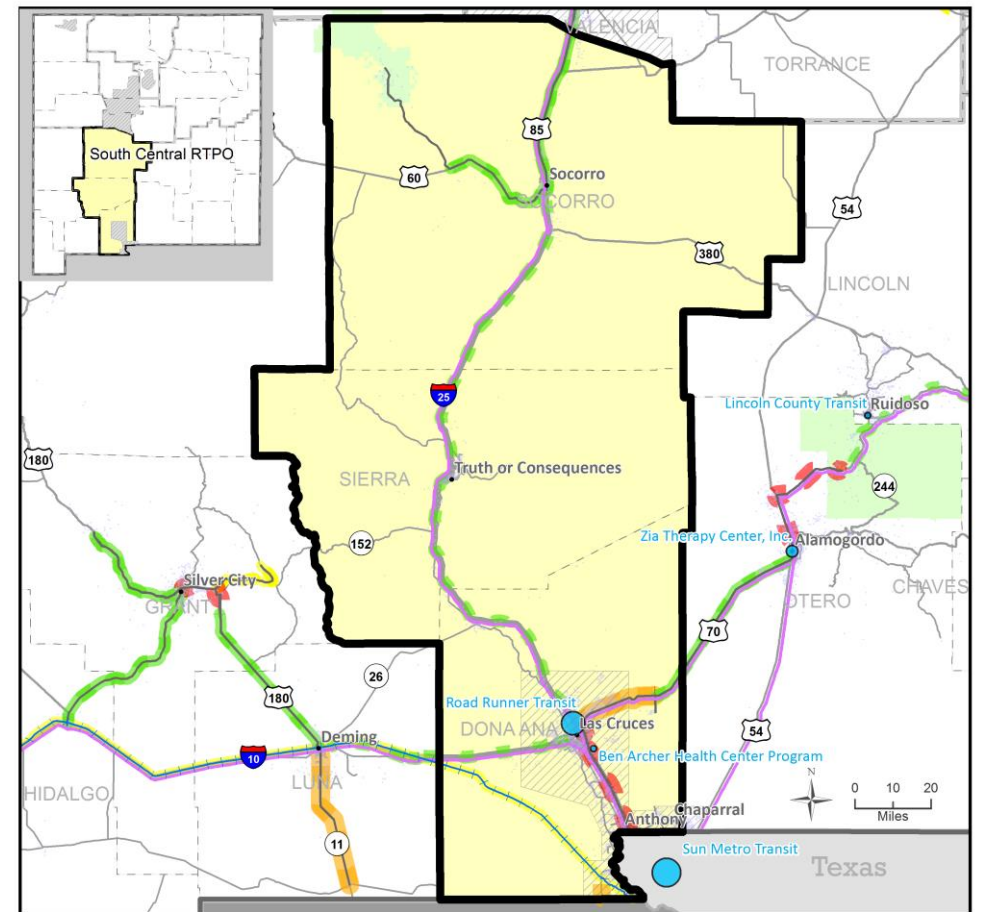
Roadway System by Tier



Transit System

Transit Service (FY 2013 Ridership)

- Rio Grande Transit (18,023)
- City of Socorro (15,864)
- Las Cruces Road Runner Transit (816,662)
- NMDOT Park and Ride
- South Central RTD
- Z-Trans



Existing/Future Transit Service Levels

2015	2050 (Anticipated)	Service Level
■	■	Level 1: > 35 scheduled trips per week in each direction
■	■	Level 2: 20-34 scheduled trips per week in each direction
■	■	Level 3: 5-19 scheduled trips per week in each direction
■	■	Level 4: 1-4 trips per week in each direction

NM Transit Providers and Annual Ridership (2013)

●	<75K
●	75K to 250K
●	250K to 800K
●	800K to 1M
●	1 M to 13.5M

Intercity Transit Services

—	Intercity
—	Bus Services
—	Greyhound
—	Amtrak

Roads and Boundaries

—	Interstate
—	US Road
■	Tribal Lands
■	Other RTPO
■	South Central RTPO
■	Counties
■	MPO
●	Cities

Population (2010)
1 dot = 20 persons

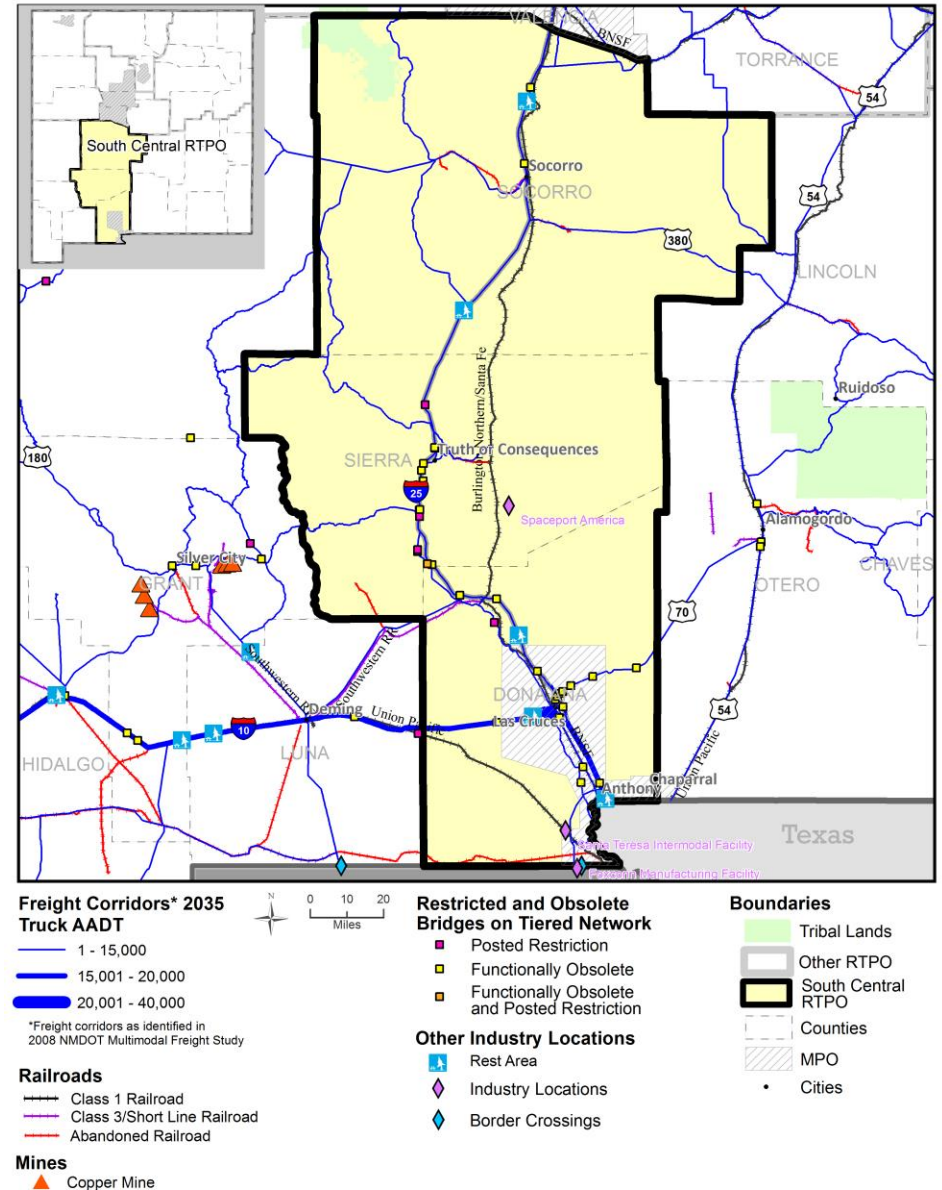
Freight

➤ Agriculture-

- Increasing volume of produce being delivered to various parts of New Mexico and throughout the United States, originating in southern Sierra County and northern Doña Ana County, the impact to the existing roadways on highway 185 is a concern. Although the heavy truck traffic through that area is seasonal, it continues to be utilized by passenger vehicles year round.
- Increasing volumes on I-25 of trucks traveling to and from Mexico and Union Pacific Strauss Facility there is a need for rest area parking and services.

➤ Rail Activity-

- Concerns regarding the rail activity at Socorro (perlite loading) and Rincon (the junction of BNSF Belen-El Paso line with Southwestern Rail Road) and the rail capacity constraints on BNSF railway due to their single track and lack of signals and signage.
- Spaceport America and its potential to become a possible future "space freight" terminal.





Goals and Strategies

Our Vision for the Future


The New Mexico Transportation Plan and this Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) are organized by five goals that lead to a vision for the future of transportation in the state. All goals are supported by a process that prioritizes transparency and accountability in all decision making. This section explains the specific strategies developed for each goal and how they will be applied. The goals and strategies for the plan were developed collaboratively, based on input from a broad range of public and private stakeholders from across New Mexico.

Over 165 partner agencies, 1150 public and stakeholder participants, and 660 survey respondents supported the development of the plan and strategies. NMDOT's 2040 New Mexico Transportation Plan (NMTP) provides the foundation for seven Regional Transportation Plans (RTP) in New Mexico. The RTPs share NMDOT's goals and strategies; however, since each region has its own unique identity and set of challenges, the statewide framework has been adapted to each region and will be carried out on a regional basis.

NMDOT cooperated closely with the state's seven Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO) and five Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to develop the NMTP. It also established a robust public and stakeholder engagement process to help ensure that the plan's vision, goals, strategies and actions would reflect a broad cross-section of statewide and regional perspectives.

To facilitate input at the (rural) regional level, the RTPOs provided opportunities for the public and agencies to learn about and comment on the plan through the regular RTPO Policy Committee meeting process and through a variety of other venues (See Appendix). Each RTPO also formed an interdisciplinary Regional Working Group (RWG) to facilitate stakeholder involvement in a more-structured and systematic fashion. RWG members included NMDOT planning liaisons, RTPO staff, NMDOT District staff, staff from other public agencies, employees of private organizations, and private citizens.





The South Central RTPO RWG included 28 members who participated in the process, meeting at each milestone of the plan Phases I, II and III. For additional information about each phase, please refer to the Appendix. These members also participated in various Statewide Working Groups (SWG) and Coordinating Committees, which also met throughout the planning phases.

The feedback and information collected from this high level of coordination among varying stakeholders helped to shape the NMTP as well as each of the seven RTPs. Since each region has its own unique set of challenges, each RWG enabled a closer look respectively at their region and how it should develop from now until 2040. The South Central RTPO's RWG identified key regional issues, how to address and achieve goals, and guide the planning process. The top three issues that came out of RWG meetings are:

1. Improving active and alternative modes of transportation options, including walking, bicycling, and transit;
2. Increasing and securing access to health care services;
3. Need for a public transportation system within the communities to access local businesses, including shopping, appointments, grocery store, etc.

Key Issues Raised in South Central RTPO RWG

- Sustainable funding for new transportation projects.
- Aging population and a lack of mobility/availability to services.
- Improve roadway connectivity.
- Desire for interconnectivity while maintaining cultural/community uniqueness.
- Improve and enhance active transportation modes (bicycle/pedestrians) to address health concerns
- Improve and enhance multimodal services (transit, bicycle, pedestrian).
- Safety of multimodal users.
- Maintenance for wildlife/mitigation projects.
- Lack of education/awareness of the public transportation possibilities.
- Improve rural transportation choices to access to health services.
- Improve transit connectivity between metropolitan and rural areas.
- Rural and Urban equity; rural communities need more representation in the process as well as resources and capacity to support projects.
- Expanding public/private partnerships.
- Remove barriers or increase flexibility with match requirements for funding opportunities. Providing large local matches can be very difficult for rural communities.
- Support small projects in communities. Since identifying matching funds in small communities is difficult, sometimes projects need to be smaller in cost.



Goal 1: Operate with Transparency and Accountability.

Although the South Central RWG did not identify this statewide goal as a regional concern, the SCRTPO is always striving to improve our efforts to operate with transparency and accountability. The SCRTPO will continue to provide its members and the public with access to all information regarding the SCRTPO as well as provide outreach services to the counties and municipalities within the South Central RTPO regarding funding opportunities and information and updates to existing programs available.

Key Priorities Raised in Regional Working Group

- No key priorities or issues were identified within the regional working group regarding concerns with operating with transparency and accountability.

RTPO Action Items

1. Organize and facilitate all meetings of SCRTPO in accordance with the Public Participation Plan. Document SCRTPO's public participation process including procedures SCRTPO uses to comply with the *New Mexico Open Meetings Act* (NMSA 1978, Sections 10-51-1, *et. Seq.*) and 23 CFR 450. Per the New Mexico Open Meetings Act and 23 CFR 450.210, provide public notice (including publication of ads in a publication in each county within the South Central region) for all official SCRTPO Committee meetings. Provide SCRTPO Committee members, the appropriate NMDOT District staff, and GTG personnel with meeting agendas and information packets no later than seven (7) calendar days in advance of SCRTPO Committee meetings.
2. Provide the public with updates via social media accounts and regional publications in an effort to keep community members well-informed of current projects, status updates, funding opportunities, etc.
3. Maintain and update all SCRTPO information on the www.rtpnm.org website.
4. Continue encourage additional participation of all stakeholders within the region.
5. Share and facilitate information to the entities within the region regarding their transportation needs and make the information accessible to the public should they be interested in the information as well.
6. Provide technical assistance to the partners in the region and promote partnerships between Federal, state, regional, tribal, local, and other agencies regarding the planning, funding, and implementation of new projects and programs.

Performance Measures

- Comply with open meetings act requirements
- Four (4) quarterly SCRTPO meetings per year
- Send two meeting reminders beginning two weeks prior, then one week prior to the quarterly SCRTPO meeting.



Goal 2: Improve Safety and Public Health for All System Users.

Safety and public health is always a priority when it comes to planning and transportation related projects. With the majority of communities within the South Central region being less populated and spread out, there is always a concern for the availability of access to healthcare services. There is also an increased interest in the creation, and safe utilization of multimodal transportation. Below are the key priorities regarding the improvement of safety and public health in the South Central region identified by the Regional Working Group.

Key Priorities Raised in Regional Working Group

- Prioritize projects to address safety especially for walking and biking.
- Reduce wildlife/vehicle collisions by 50%.
- Promote active transportation – more walking/biking trails.
- Rural/urban equity regarding access to healthcare.
- More programs to discourage texting and driving.
- Safe “last mile” access and connectivity.

RTPO Action Items

1. Work closely with local governments to develop and implement plans and identify projects that support active lifestyles and provide community members with a safe, well lit, and maintained areas in which to walk and/or bike.
2. Assist local governments in identifying areas in which safety improvements are needed and inform them of programs within the NMDOT (e.g., NMHSIP) that focuses on safety projects and improvements, and facilitate the NMHSIP safety application process.
3. Work with NMDOT to provide local governments and interested parties with safety trainings offered to inform drivers of the dangers of texting and driving and continued information on any safety trainings provided.
4. Maintain a working relationship with New Mexico Game and Fish department to identify areas in which wildlife/vehicle collisions are concentrated, assist in the identification and qualifications of funding for projects to decrease/avoid wildlife/vehicle collisions.



Performance Measures

- Each quarterly scheduled SCRTPO meeting will include a professional development training for the joint Policy and Technical Committee and those in attendance.
- Invite agencies with knowledge of specific issues that are relevant to topic to be addressed at each quarterly scheduled SCRTPO meeting.
- Provide informational documentation on relevant programs that will assist in funding of safety projects and improvements.



Goal 3: Preserve and Maintain our Transportation Assets for the Long Term.

Maintaining existing infrastructure and services is crucial to a successful transportation system. The preservation of existing infrastructure is an issue of concern in areas such as the farming communities of Salem and Garfield in northern Doña Ana County, and Arrey, in southern Sierra County where the majority of the counties' roadways are narrow and aged. Large trucks travel up and down that road and the aging infrastructure along with the funds to improve it is a concern.

Key Priorities Raised in Regional Working Group

- Think regionally and connect rural areas.
- Sustainable revenue sources that moves with the needs.
- Improved access and roadways for large truck travel.

RTPO Action Items

1. Encourage local governments to submit funding applications through Local Government Road Fund, Capital Outlay, Community Development Block Grant funding, or similar programs that will address infrastructure issues.
2. Continue to advocate for a public transit system throughout the region in partnership with the South Central Regional Transit District to provide regional connectivity to possibly ease traffic flow and preserve existing infrastructure.

Performance Measures

- Attend monthly SCRTD meetings to keep abreast of the happenings regarding public transportation and its progress/availability in the region.



Goal 4: Provide Multimodal Access and Connectivity for Community Prosperity.

The increased interest in multimodal transportation is viewed as an immense advantage to the South Central region. Popular tourist attractions are found throughout the region and the need for transportation to access these destinations was identified by the Regional Working group as a definite priority. The inception of a public transportation system in the areas that do not currently have one would benefit not only residents of the region, they would also facilitate the accessibility to the tourists visiting the area as well, ultimately increasing revenue.

Key Priorities Raised in Regional Working Group

- Improve access to metropolitan areas and major tourist attractions.
- Increase transit options and explore public-private partnerships for sustainable funding.
- Improve public transportation connectivity.
- Walking and biking trails that interconnect locally.
- Educate public on transit possibilities.
- Develop network of transportation hubs to provide regional connectivity.

RTPO Action Items

1. Support transit system stakeholders in their pursuit of public transportation through the South Central Regional Transit District.
2. Initiate partnerships with various programs and agencies (e.g., school districts, Area Agency on Aging, Hospitals) that also have transportation initiatives.
3. Coordinate with local governments and agencies (e.g., State Parks, Forest Service, and National Parks) that would have vested interests in participating in land use agreements to create or extend existing walking and bike trails to allow patrons to enhance their experiences within the region and to encourage them to utilize the services and resources of the partnering agency.
4. Encourage local governments to participate in the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and offer suggestions to NMDOT Staff on the guidelines.

Performance Measures

- Attend monthly SCRTD meetings to keep abreast of the happenings regarding public transportation and its progress/availability in the region.
- Attend community and public meeting, empowerment congress meetings, health council meetings, and senior citizen advisory group meetings.



Goal 5: Respect New Mexico's Cultures, Environment, History, and Quality of Life.

Rural areas within the South Central region have very distinct and unique identities. From the vast agricultural settings in northern Doña Ana and Southern Sierra counties, the natural hot springs and Elephant Butte Lake State park (which are both very popular tourist destinations as well as local favorites), to the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array (VLA); these areas provide residents and visitors alike with opportunities to appreciate the area and enjoy the diverse cultures found within the region. Connecting the communities, providing multimodal access to these destinations, increasing economic development, and maintaining their distinctness and individuality are definite priorities in the region.

Key Priorities Raised in Regional Working Group

- Context sensitive planning approach to address distinctive needs of communities.
- Thriving rural communities (consider decisions that provide economic development opportunities for rural communities).
- Incentives for transportation alternatives that decrease pollution.
- Access to and opportunity for recreation.
- Preserve community identity.
- Services for aging population.
- Support MainStreets.

RTPO Action Items

1. Providing local governments and the public with information regarding the importance and the need for planning projects that will promote healthier more active modes of transportation to decrease emissions from the use of motorized vehicles.
2. Coordinate with local governments and agencies (e.g., State Parks, Forest Service, and National Parks) that would have vested interests in participating in land use agreements to create or extend existing walking and bike trails to allow patrons to enhance their experiences within the region and to encourage them to utilize the services and resources of the partnering agency.
3. Assist communities within the region with identifying and pursuing historical site recognition in their areas.

Performance Measures

- Receiving information from local governments and agencies in conjunction with the goal to be attained.
- Present SCRTPO Joint Policy and Technical Committee with a presentation on the preservation of community identity at a quarterly scheduled SCRTPO meeting.



Next Steps: Action Items and Accountability

The South Central RTPO plays an important role in working with the NMDOT to implement the overall NMTP and this RTP. This section describes the specific actions in which to meet the expectations of the RTP and who will be responsible for the implementation of the action items. This will help SCRTPO measure the progress of this plan and increase transparency for the stakeholders. This section also includes a discussion of STIP development.

Summary of Action Items

Action Item	Owner (i.e. who's responsible)
Goal 1: Operate with Transparency and Accountability	
1. Document and facilitate SCRTPO meetings in accordance with the PPP, comply with Open Meetings Act requirements.	■ SCRTPO Planner
2. Provide updates to the public	■ SCRTPO Planner
3. Maintain and update information on the www.rtpnm.org website.	■ SCRTPO Planner
4. Encourage additional participation of stakeholders in the South Central region.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Joint Policy & Technical Committee
5. Share and facilitate information regarding transportation needs to local government entities, concerned parties, and the public.	■ SCRTPO Planner
6. Provide technical assistance and promote partnerships between Federal, state, regional, tribal, local, and other agencies regarding planning, funding, programs, and project implementation.	■ SCRTPO Planner
Goal 2: Improve Safety and Public Health for All System Users	
1. Work closely with local governments to develop and implement plans and identify projects that support active lifestyles and provide community members with a safe, well lit, and maintained areas in which to walk and/or bike.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Local Government Entities
2. Assist local governments in identifying areas in which safety improvements are needed and inform them of programs within the NMDOT (e.g., NMHSIP) that focuses on safety projects and improvements, and facilitate the NMHSIP safety application process.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Local Government Entities
3. Work with NMDOT to provide local governments and interested parties with safety trainings offered to inform drivers of the dangers of texting and driving and continued information on any safety trainings provided.	■ SCRTPO Planner, NMDOT



Action Item	Owner (i.e. who's responsible)
4. Maintain a working relationship with New Mexico Game and Fish department to identify areas in which wildlife/vehicle collisions are concentrated, assist in the identification and qualifications of funding for projects to decrease/avoid wildlife/vehicle collisions.	■ SCRTPO Planner, NM Game and Fish Department
Goal 3: Preserve and Maintain Our Transportation System for the Long Term	
1. Encourage local governments to submit funding applications through Local Government Road Fund, Capital Outlay, Community Development Block Grant funding, or similar programs that will address infrastructure issues.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Local Government Entities
2. Continue to advocate for a public transit system throughout the region in partnership with the South Central Regional Transit District to provide regional connectivity to possibly ease traffic flow and preserve existing infrastructure.	■ SCRTPO Planner
Goal 4: Provide Multimodal Access and Connectivity for Community Prosperity	
1. Support transit system stakeholders in their pursuit of public transportation through the South Central Regional Transit District.	■ SCRTPO Planner
2. Initiate partnerships with various programs and agencies (e.g., School Districts, Area Agency on Aging, Hospitals) that also have transportation initiatives.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Partnering Agencies
3. Coordinate with local governments and agencies (e.g., State Parks, Forest Service, and National Parks) that would have vested interests in participating in land use agreements to create or extend existing walking and bike trails to allow patrons to enhance their experiences within the region and to encourage them to utilize the services and resources of the partnering agency.	■ SCRTPO Planner. Local Government Entities, Partnering Agencies,
4. Encourage local governments to participate in the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and offer suggestions to NMDOT Staff on the guidelines.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Local Government Entities
Goal 5: Respect New Mexico's Cultures, Environment, History, and Quality of Life	
1. Providing local governments and the public with information regarding the importance and the need for planning projects that will promote healthier more active modes of transportation to decrease emissions from the use of motorized vehicles.	■ SCRTPO Planner
2. Coordinate with local governments and agencies (e.g., State Parks, Forest Service, and National Parks) that would have vested interests in participating in land use agreements to create or extend existing walking and bike trails to allow patrons to enhance their experiences within the region and to encourage them to utilize the services and resources of the partnering agency.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Local Government Entities, Partnering Agencies



Action Item	Owner (i.e. who's responsible)
3. Assist communities within the region with identifying and pursuing historical site recognition in their areas.	■ SCRTPO Planner, Regional Communities



RTPO Involvement in STIP Development

SCRTPO and Regional TIP Development. The processes involved for local governments and agencies to begin their involvement with the Regional TIP begin through the application processes for NMDOT funding. Application forms and instructions present sections needed for packaging a proposal for funding. These application tools include language encouraging, if not requiring, consistency with the RTP and related planning documents. The application process usually includes a points system as part of the scoring process that rewards those project applications already included in planning documents, demonstrating previous planning and approvals from their local boards and councils. The application processes include project feasibility reviews which bring the Applicant, NMDOT District Staff & Liaisons, and RTPO Program Managers together for a discussion on whether or not the proposed transportation project(s) are in fact viable. If through the meeting, the project(s) are identified as feasible, there is discussion of how applications can be improved for a more competitive application and successful funding. The processes encourage applicants to develop transportation projects through the preliminary stages of obtaining environmental clearances and design.

Roadway, TAP, RTP and NMHSIP. Local Governments (and agencies, as appropriate) will make applications for local-lead, federally-funded Roadway projects, as per the criteria established by the South Central RTPO. For Roadway, an application package is approved prior to SCRTPO issuing a Call-For-Projects. Its application package includes the application forms, criteria and scoring sheet. SCRTPO has the ability to meet, revise and approve changes to its application format, instructions and criteria. Local-lead applications for TAP, RTP and NMHSIP programs follow the NMDOT Guides established for those programs.

Transportation Stakeholders. Transportation stakeholders have the opportunity to provide input on transportation projects through their invitation to SCRTPO meetings. Meeting dates and content is known through the circulation of meeting agendas, to include online postings on www.rtpnm.org website and publication in newspapers in each area within the region. RWG Member participation included established Transportation Stakeholders and was expanded into new areas (e.g., agricultural interests, mining, law enforcement, health care, public school, etc.), following the intent of MAP-21 legislation. Including new RWG members onto the existing Transportation Stakeholder contacts has already occurred.

Updating the Regional Transportation Plan. The SCRTPO is aware that the need for updates to the regional transportation plan may occur as there are often changes of priority in the region and as it becomes apparent that applications for transportation funding can be scored higher with such amendments to the Plan. The process established by the SCRTPO to make such changes include bringing the amendments before SCRTPO Members in a regular public meeting, allowing for discussion/comment/recommendations and requiring their approval for the update to the Regional Plan. The amended plan will be brought to the SCRTPO board for review and submitted to NMDOT for approval.



Appendix: Public Involvement Process

Overview of Public Outreach Process

Regional Working Groups (RWG) were organized individually by each RTPO with NMDOT assistance. Each RWG was comprised of NMDOT Divisions, NMDOT Districts and other public agencies, private organizations, and the RTPO itself. These working groups met at each Phase of the NMTP development and provided key input into the plan.

In Phase I, the South Central RWG provided input on the vision and goals for 2040, and identified the key challenges and opportunities to achieve that vision as well as identifying the data and information needed to address these questions.

In Phase II, the RWG provided input on the strategies, actions, investments, policies and performance standards to address regional transportation needs.

During Phase III, the group was asked to evaluate three distinct plan alternatives on their ability to meet the NMTP goals and objectives. The RWG provided input on the plan framework, investment priorities, management practices, performance standards, and other policies included in these alternatives which helped to define the NMTP strategies for achieving the goals as defined for the 2040 plan horizon.

The South Central RTP was developed in coordination with the NMTP project team, RTPO planners, and NMDOT liaisons. The South Central RTPO Committee internally reviewed the South Central RTP.

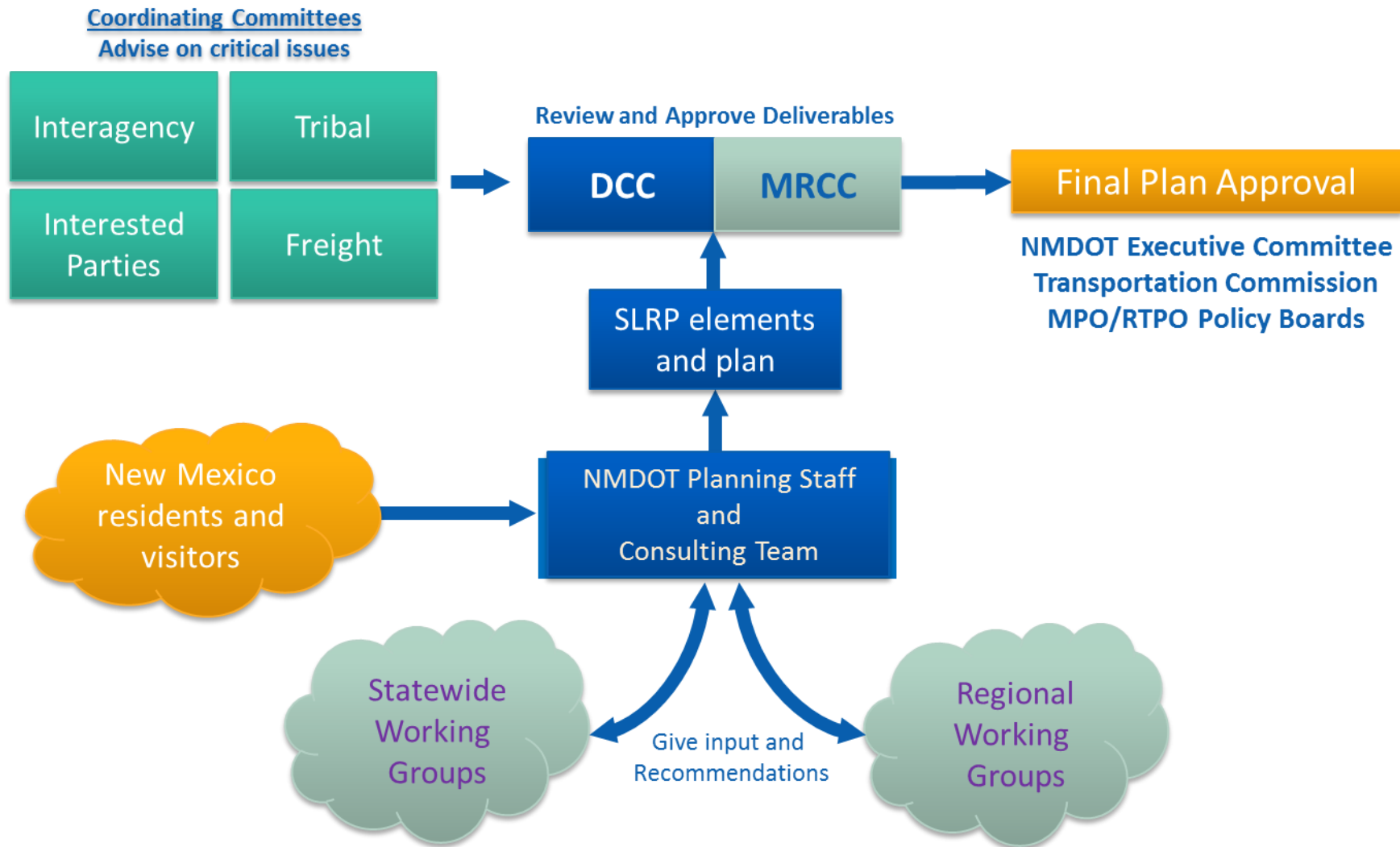
RTPOs were actively involved in the plan approval and implementation phase, Phase IV, of the process by facilitating draft presentations of the RTP, gathering internal stakeholder input, and finalizing the draft plan for approval by the New Mexico State Transportation Commission.

Throughout the plan phases, RTPO planners worked to engage the public through a variety of methods including information stations at public events such as health fairs, conference presentations, and public surveys. The South Central RTPO participated in a total of four (4) events and three (3) public meetings, which engaged not only community members and residents with the South Central region, but throughout New Mexico as well.



The overall organization of the stakeholder involvement process is diagramed below.

NMTP Stakeholder Process



Phase I: Existing Conditions

Phase I of the NMTP process asked the question, “Where are we now?” The objective of the meeting was to gather information on regional conditions, trends, issues and opportunities and solicit input on the statewide plan goals and objectives.

The South Central RWG first met on March 14, 2014, at the Richard Cooper Training Center, in Elephant Butte. A total of 15 members participated including representatives from NMDOT, South Central RTPO, South Central New Mexico Council of Governments, New Mexico State Police, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Truth or Consequences Housing Authority, Truth or Consequences Commission, Ministerial Alliance, Sierra Health Council, and Sierra Vista Hospital, as well as private citizens. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Introduce the consulting team and the Regional Working Group-1 (RWG-1) members
- Review objectives of the plan, schedule, and NMTP development process
- Review working group charter and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) action planning outline
- Discuss 2040 vision, key issues, challenges, and needs to be addressed throughout the planning process
- Identify the data and existing plans available to support RTP/NMTP development

During the working session, participants were asked to discuss and identify the following:

- What are the vision and goals for 2040?
- What are the challenges and opportunities to achieve that vision?
- What data and information do we need to answer these questions?

Below are the key discussion points made in the breakout working groups and plenary discussions.





Synthesis of 2040 Vision Discussion

- Rural vs. urban equity with regard to healthcare, transit, and highway access.
- “Healthcare access” involves several interconnected issues, including emergency transport, the emergency process and procedural impact to the patient and the family, logistics, and coordination of needed care (e.g., transporting patients a long distance from home with no transport back; no access to personal medical records or personal physicians; being transported in an emergency to the nearest facility that is ill equipped for the patient’s needs).
- Access to and opportunity for recreation (not only for tourism but quality of life as well).
- SLRP should be sensitive to the identity and future vision of each community; should consider the vested interests (e.g., Spaceport); and should consider rural communities as an investment.
- Consider infrastructure decision impacts to rural communities (e.g., including economic development opportunities for rural communities).
- Think regionally, connect rural areas to critical resources.
- Impacts of the NMSA visitor center for Spaceport in T or C and Hatch- these communities cannot connect all their development plans to the Spaceport (“all eggs cannot go in this one basket”).
- Preserving community identities is not only important in itself, it can create opportunities too.

Synthesis of Key Challenges Discussion

- Funding is a challenge for rural projects due to the rural population and socioeconomic status of that population (these are tied together because small population and lower income results in less tax base to provide funding for projects).
- Enabling the public to be part of the NMDOT process and solutions. Use social media to build engagement for local solutions to problems.
- Attracting and keeping youth is a challenge, you will lose local capacity/social capital.
- Not only about more money- funding will not fix everything.
- Education and awareness of who owns the roadways (e.g., I-25 business exchange is the NMDOT’s responsibility and the public is unaware of this).
- Better communication avenues between the public and the City or NMDOT.



Synthesis of Data Needs Discussion

- Evaluation of successes and failures.
- Local assessments and data.

Phase II: Strategic Direction

- Phase II of the NMTP process asked the question, “Where do we want to go?” The objective of the meeting was to discuss the scenario analysis framework and to solicit input on the strategies, actions, investments, policies and performance standards to address regional transportation needs.
- The South Central RWG met on June 18, 2014, at the New Mexico Grads Building, in Socorro. A total of 10 members participated including representatives from NMDOT, South Central RTPO, South Central New Mexico Council of Governments, New Mexico State Police, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, University of New Mexico Health Extension, Socorro County FEMA, City of Socorro, Sierra Health Council, and Evergrow Farms. The purpose of the meeting was to:
 - Provide overview of plan activities completed since the Phase I meeting
 - Present and solicit reactions to the scenario analysis framework
 - Brainstorm strategies, actions, investments, policies, and performance standards to address regional transportation needs for consideration in the NMTP alternatives analysis

In a large plenary discussion session, participants were asked to discuss the following:

- What key themes needing emphasis and/or themes were missing from the Phase I RWG summary?
- What key issues, factors, or trends will need to be addressed by NMDOT in the next 10 to 25 years?

Participants were then asked to break into small groups to brainstorm policies, programs, and projects to address regional transportation needs at three geographic scales: inter-regional, inter-community, and within community.





Synthesis of Common Themes

- Sustainable revenue source that is not static but moves with the needs such as license fees, vehicle registration, vehicle miles traveled, i.e., user fees. Are user fees the fairest way?
- Public sector vs. private sector impacts fee, user fee, natural gas tax, fuel taxes. Should the public sector pay the same as the private?
- Better consultation with Department of Game and Fish in the design of new roadway right-of-way fencing and/or the maintenance of existing roads.
- Prioritize projects to address safety, especially for walking and bicycling. Strong guidelines/measures should lead to safety improvements in the roadway design and maintenance.
- Safe “last mile” access and connectivity, i.e., once you get off at your stop, can you safely get to your final destination? Are there sidewalks, easy connections, etc?
- Improve transportation amenities but maintain what we have in rural New Mexico.
- Develop a network of transportation hubs, areas of investment in the transportation system, to attract industry and support economic development. Establish a series of transportation hubs in the region to spur economic development, e.g., Socorro County is a good location for a hub because of good auto, rail and airport access.
- Programs are needed to support public transportation that links small communities.
- Large trucks need improved access in the region for produce shipping.
- Improve public transportation connectivity.

Phase III: Resource Allocation

Phase III of the NMTP process asked the question, “How are we going to get there?” The objective of the Phase III meeting was to introduce the draft plan alternatives and solicit input on the plan framework, investment priorities, management practices, performance standards, and other policies included in these alternatives.

The South Central RWG met on November 21, 2014, at the Richard Cooper Training Center, in Elephant Butte. A total of 4 members participated including representatives from NMDOT, South Central RTPO, South Central New Mexico Council of Governments, and the Ministerial Alliance. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide a summary of work to date
- Provide an overview of the Plan Alternatives
- Perform the Alternatives Rating Exercise
- Plenary discussion to obtain feedback on the pros and cons of each Plan Alternative

A series of three Plan Alternatives were presented to the members. Alternatives A and B assumed that there would be no change from NMDOT’s current budget trajectory (i.e., steadily diminishing revenue in inflation-adjusted terms), while Alternative C assumed that one or more new sources of revenue might become available at some point in the future.

The team asked the participants to review the alternatives carefully, note comments, and assign scores to them based on how well each addressed the four plan goals as well as the practicality of implementation. The team then reviewed all of the comments and scores to identify overall themes (see table below).





Alternative A <i>Trend Based On Current Practices</i>	Alternative B <i>Management + Focused Investment</i>	Alternative C <i>Aspirational Vision + New Revenues</i>
Least responsive to goals – reactive, not proactive	More proactive and responsive to goals than Alt A, but less than Alt C	Most responsive to goals – a proactive approach
Status quo – assumes current investment and management practices are the best for future challenges.	Invests NMDOT’s funds more strategically and emphasizes strong policies (e.g., life-cycle costing) to support sustainable management of assets.	Additional funds and expanded priorities create opportunities to address long-term needs in a strategic fashion.
Recognizes: (a) good things that NMDOT is already doing (e.g., improving safety) and (b) change can be disruptive.	Prioritization framework may favor urban areas and high volume corridors	Implementation depends on new revenue. Focus on revenue may draw attention away from the need to be more cost-effective.



Phase IV: Plan Approval and Implementation

RTPOs were actively involved in the plan approval and implementation phase by presenting the draft RTP to the RWG, the SCRTPO and gathering internal stakeholder input to revise and finalize the plan for approval by the New Mexico State Transportation Commission. RTPO and RWG members also vetted the NMTP at the MPO/RPO Coordinating Committee Meeting.

The MPO/RPO Coordinating Committee meeting was held on April 14, 2015, at the Mid-Region Council of Governments Boardroom at 809 Copper Avenue NW, in Albuquerque. A total of 28 members participated including representatives from NMDOT. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide an overview of the “Coordinating Committee Review Draft” of the New Mexico Transportation Plan (NMTP)
- Identify areas of strong alignment between state and regional/metropolitan plans
- Discuss region-specific actions and implementation activities

Synthesis of Discussion

The following is an overview of the plenary discussion.

Table 1: Mid-Region MPO, Santa Fe MPO

- Coordination with NMDOT liaison, RTPO and MPO to make sure this plan happens.
- NMDOT must approach solutions from “transportation” perspective, not the Highway Department focus.
- Aspects of Complete Streets should be included throughout, not just under one goal/strategy.

Table 2: Northern Pueblos RTPO, Mid-Region RTPO, Northwest RTPO, Farmington MPO

- When you don’t implement scenario planning into modeling, it burdens the planning process. Travel-demand, smaller capacity, and financial modeling should be built into MPO plan.
- Continue interagency coordination, expanding beyond transportation (e.g., groups focused on economic vitality).

Table 3: Southeast RTPO, Northeast RTPO

- Association and support for RTPOs is missing in the plan; acknowledge them and use them as partners (“we are NMDOT’s arm”). RTPO role could be more explicit.
- Work with local entities to do asset management, valuation of assets and more funding for preservation and maintenance.



Table 4: South Central RTPO, Southwest RTPO

- Partnerships, training and education, communication, asset management
- Not mentioned in the plan is collaboration with Environmental Protection Agency, recreation and tourism collaboration with Economic Development Department, and no mention of the Councils of Government (they are designated by the Federal Government as economic development districts).

Takeaways for your own MTP or RTP

- Do local asset management
- Mid-Region has begun implementation of asset management
- NMTP focus on travel demand and O & M instead of capacity is a benefit to the MPOs. It substantiates the preservation and maintenance of existing infrastructure. Coming from the NMDOT gives it more weight.
- Can the actions be accomplished with the existing budget? Is additional budget needed or allocated?
- Do performance measures need to be evaluated every year? From the MPO perspective, it would not be recommended. Not much changes within the annual time frame.
- Think more about funding coordination and transparency. Who is at the table for this?



Phase V: RTP Approval and Implementation

The South Central RWG met on June 17, 2015 at the Richard E. Cooper Training Center, Elephant Butte Lake State Park, 101 Highway 195, Elephant Butte, NM 87935. A total of #15 members participated including representatives from NMDOT, South Central RTPO planner, Truth or Consequences Municipal Schools, Truth or Consequences Police Department, and elected officials and representatives from all counties within the South Central region. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Present the draft RTP
- Solicit feedback

The consensus from all present was that the issues and needs presented in the South Central Regional Transportation Plan (SCRTP) were clear concise, and definitely a representation of the transportation priorities within the region.

RTPO Public Outreach

The NMTP public participation framework included opportunities for various public outreach methods across the state including surveys, interviews, public events and meetings as well as information stations. Throughout the plan phases, RTPO planners worked to engage the public through a variety of methods. The South Central RTPO outreach efforts included:

- Sierra County Health Council Meeting
- Socorro County Council Meeting
- Sierra County Fair
- New Mexico Infrastructure Finance Conference
- Three (3) public meetings held in each county within the South Central region (Sierra, Socorro, and Doña Ana counties)

The South Central RTPO participated in a total of seven events in an attempt to gather input representative of the transportation need viewed by community members and residents not only within the South Central RTPO planning area but from throughout New Mexico as well.